# Exploring generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the South African emerging market context

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M Consumer Science (Clothing Retail Management)

Supervisor: Dr N.C. Sonnenberg

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by

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# DECLARATION

I, **Nicolé Conradie**, declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of **M in Consumer Science: Clothing Retail Management** at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. I also confirm that all reference material in the dissertation has been duly acknowledged.

NICOLÉ CONRADIE

2023

# DEDICATION

Dedicated to my ever-loving and supportive parents and grandparents who taught me the value of hard work, perseverance, and determination.

Hoping to keep making you proud forever.

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I would like to thank the following people who have assisted and encouraged me throughout the journey:

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# SUMMARY

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**Exploring generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the South African emerging market context**

**By**

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Supervisor: Dr. N.C. Sonnenberg
Department: Consumer and Food Sciences
Degree: Masters in Consumer Science (Clothing Retail Management)

**Keywords:** Clothing Consumption, Ecological Awareness, Generational Cohorts, Generational Cohort Theory, Material Simplicity, Sustainable Clothing, Voluntary Simplicity.

In a developing country such as South Africa, consumption plays a vital role in boosting economic growth and creating job opportunities. However, there are growing concerns about how the existing fast fashion model encourages excessive consumption and generates huge amounts of waste. With the onset of industrialization, human actions have significantly impacted the climate in unprecedented ways. The fashion industry is expanding rapidly, despite the well-known negative effects it has on the environment. Fast fashion is a major contributor to this growth, relying on low-cost production, frequent consumption, and short garment lifecycles. However, many people worldwide have recently become aware of the impact of excessive consumption. The pandemic highlighted resource scarcities, leading to expected changes in consumer behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be the impetus for a transition towards sustainable consumption (Cinar, 2020; Cohen, 2020). The concept of sustainability is closely linked to voluntary simplicity and is gaining global attention, particularly in the fashion industry. Voluntary simplicity promotes a simple way of life that focuses on essential consumption rather than excessive consumption. However, the idea of voluntary simplistic consumption, especially in the fashion industry, hasn't been extensively explored yet, particularly regarding differences among generational cohorts in the local context. Additionally, no research has been conducted to determine consumers' inclination towards voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this research aims to explore generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the local South African context.

A review of existing literature highlights five voluntary simplicity dimensions that were initially proposed by Elgin and Mitchell (1977). These dimensions were later used by Leonard-Barton (1981) to develop a behavioural index on which the scale items for this study were based. During the initial data generation, questionnaire development and collection commenced in 2021 as part of a larger final-year Clothing Retail management research project in the Department of Consumer and Food Science at the University of Pretoria. The scale items used were derived from existing scales developed and adapted by Reis (2019), Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) to measure voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour. Hence, the voluntary simplistic dimensions of material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness, and human scale were revised for clothing practices in particular and used as a foundation for this study. The research utilised an online survey that was self-administered and distributed via Qualtrics. The survey questionnaire consisted of seven sections, but only two of these were used for the purposes of this study and specifically those that measured voluntary simplistic (sustainable) clothing consumption, and demographics. A total of 788 questionnaire responses were considered satisfactory and formed part of the final dataset for this study. The project adopted a quantitative approach with the use of a cross-sectional survey that predominantly served exploratory purposes. The data analysis followed a descriptive approach to highlight the demographic profile of the sample, and an exploratory factor analysis (Centobelli *et al.*, 2022) to determine underlying factors in the voluntary simplistic clothing consumption data. Thereafter, a one-way analysis of variances (Inanova *et al.*, 2019) was implemented to determine any significant differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices.

The EFA revealed a five-factor solution with loadings that were well-isolated with no cross-loadings. The five factors were subsequently labelled as "Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption", "Handcrafted Clothing Consumption", "Reduced Consumption", "Locally Produced Clothing", and "Repurposed Clothing". The most statistically prominent factor, namely "Reduced clothing consumption" may stem from the initial data generation that was gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, when consumption was limited, and consumer spending was restricted. Overall, respondents seem to engage in all five consumption practices from a moderate to more frequent level. Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that, in comparison to younger generations, older generations such as Baby Boomers are more inclined to engage in reduced consumption behaviour, repurpose/ repair unwanted clothing and support ethical and local clothing alternatives. In theory, Baby Boomers are said to be more interdependent than younger generations. Interdependent individuals tend to exhibit higher ethical standards and demonstrate increased concern for community issues. As

a result, they tend to experience greater guilt when faced with ethical dilemmas, leading them to act (Ham *et al.*, 2022). These results accentuate Mannheim's (1970) Generational Cohort Theory (GCT), which emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals of the same generation and their shared experiences, behaviour, and attitudes through historical events.

The findings of this study can provide a practical foundation for profiling local consumers who engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour. This can allow marketers to refine their marketing strategies, especially with regard to generational cohorts. The comprehension gained from this study could further equip local clothing businesses with the necessary tools to achieve their sustainability goals through effective marketing of sustainable alternatives. Theoretically, the study narrows a gap in the current literature surrounding the value of the GCT in interpreting various generational cohorts' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, specifically in the local emerging market context. Future research could focus on expanding the results of this study, by incorporating more representative samples and then particularly establishing whether voluntary simplistic consumption practices have endured beyond the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

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# CHAPTER 1

# THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is said to be the third largest manufacturing sector in the world and also one of the most polluting industries globally with consumption levels increasing on an ongoing basis (Srivastava, 2021). In a developing country such as South Africa, clothing consumption fuels economic growth and encourages job creation (Cooper, 2019), but one has to consider at what cost. Concern has been expressed about how the present fast fashion business model promotes excessive consumption and produces tremendous amounts of waste. A recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) claims that since the advent of industrialization, human activity has irrefutably changed the climate in unparalleled ways. By the end of this decade, it is predicted that a 63% rise in worldwide demand for apparel and footwear, will result in dire consequences and severely compromise the well-being of future generations (IPCC, 2022).

Due to its environmental impact, the fashion industry is increasingly under global scrutiny for its polluting supply chain operations. For instance, the clothing industry produces an estimated 8-10% of global carbon emissions and is one of the main culprits of water consumption and pollution (Niinimäki *et al.*, 2020). The fashion industry is also known for its social impact in exploiting cheap labour and perpetuating unjust working conditions (Lambert, 2014). Despite the widely broadcasted environmental and social impacts, the industry persists in growing, in part due to fast fashion that relies heavily on cheap manufacturing, recurrent consumption, and short lifecycles of garment use (Cooper, 2019). Fast fashion has fueled a significant increase in clothing consumption and in turn, contributes to the rising environmental and social impact of the fashion industry (Niinimäki *et al.*, 2020). However, in recent years many clothing retailers, manufacturers, and consumers have recognized the threat imposed by increased consumption and have since devoted efforts toward minimizing the harmful impact of suchconsumption. It is believed that this conscious attempt by various stakeholders gained more traction during the COVID-19 pandemic because resource scarcity was emphasised and thus forced consumers to re-consider their consumption habits and avoid unnecessary consumption (Cinar, 2020). Such behaviour is directly related to an underlying lifestyle approach known as “voluntary simplicity”.

Reduced consumption and choosing local, sustainable, and ethical alternatives are linked to

voluntary simplicity (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). Elgin and Mitchell (1977), who are seminal authors on the topic, defined voluntary simplicity as a choice to become internally rich by living a basic, simple lifestyle based on principal views that such lifestyles provide opportunities to build stronger communities and minimise environmental harm. Voluntary simplicity is focused on the idea of a simple life that is centred around the concept of essential consumption instead of excessive consumption. The notion of voluntary simplicity has evolved over time, however, still captures the goal of simplifying one's lifestyle, with different consumers adopting various alternatives for achieving such a lifestyle (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). The fundamental assumptions of voluntary simplistic consumption, as identified in the earlier work of Elgin and Mitchell (1977) include, amongst others, material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness, and human scale. These dimensions were further adapted by authors such as Reis (2019) as well as Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) to reflect a clothing perspective and include behavioural practices such as ethical and environmentally friendly clothing consumption, the repurposing of clothing (thereby ensuring the longevity of apparel), acquiring unique handcrafted garments (to support local artisans) and the overall reduction of clothing consumption (by focusing on need rather than want). In general, these types of practices are seen as distinguishing ways in which consumers might embrace voluntary simplicity by living a basic, simple lifestyle, devoid of excessive material goods, supporting local communities and the environment and in doing so, achieving fulfilment in alternative ways (Chang, 2018).

However, it is important to note that consumer behaviour is not constant in every situation and various factors are at play that would affect these behaviours and the accompanying lifestyle choices an individual makes. As circumstances and underlying factors evolve, behaviour changes accordingly (Kumar, 2014). Previous research surrounding the influencing factors of pro-environmental behaviour and green consumption (which complement voluntary simplistic lifestyles) has, for example, identified various demographic and psychological determinants (Nguyen, Lobo & Greenland, 2017). Also, Chang (2018) explains that consumers' values and motivations for engaging in voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour range from intense personal concerns to discontent surrounding more serious social problems. Therefore, individuals' willingness to engage in a voluntary simplistic lifestyle can depend on their demographic profile, but also more specifically on a social dilemma they may face, which involves a conflict between their immediate self-interest and their long-term shared interests (Lange *et al.*, 2013). Consumers nowadays are becoming more conscious of their social obligations and their direct impact on the environment as a result of their purchasing behaviour. People are becoming more aware of the alleged benefits of adopting environmentally conscious decisions and are seemingly reaching a consensus that it is crucial for them to adopt practices to protect the environment and its limited resources (Ali *et al.*, 2023).

The COVID-19 outbreak, including the restrictions imposed on communities worldwide, confronted consumers with a dilemma whereby they were forced into a basic lifestyle with limited consumption. Social distancing regulations affected consumers' buying preferences and behaviours considerably and since the early outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have undergone significant deviations from their normal shopping behaviour. The lockdown restrictions for example limited accessibility of non-essential stores due to health concerns. As pointed out by Pantano *et al.* (2020) these unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, led consumers to review their shopping habits. Moreover, lockdown restrictions may also have increased people's awareness of the negative impact of their consumption on the environment (Cambefort, 2020). In addition, Goffman (2020) explains that the shift from short-term materialism towards a more socially compassionate ethic that emerged during these times might be expected to continue in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. External events such as those described above, influence consumers' behaviour significantly, but it is also important to note that the extent of such influence may differ from one generational cohort to another (Inanova *et al.*, 2019).

Although the unprecedented events of the pandemic may have prompted consumers to reduce their consumption and to express more environmental and social concern, the question remains whether it affected all members of all generations equally. Research by Marjanen *et al.* (2019) for example noted that age and generational cohort membership affect shopping orientation in general. A generational cohort can be defined as a group of individuals born during a particular period in time, who share the same social characteristics and historical experiences (Inanova *et al.*, 2019). Since the respective generations are not alike due to their divergent experiences, it has been found that differences exist in their values, attitudes, preferences and by implication, their consumption behaviour. Generational cohorts' experiences shape their perspectives in intricate ways and can be expected to influence the changes experienced in consumption behaviour over time (Chaney, Touzani & Slimane, 2017).

The Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) assumes that individuals who experience the same and comparable historical, social, cultural, political, and economic events during their formative years will exhibit similar basic beliefs and behavioural patterns throughout their lives (Mannheim, 1970). The GCT has been extensively applied in various research studies (Bathmanathan, Rajadurai & Sohail, 2018; Chaney, Touzani & Ben Slimane, 2017; Eger *et al.*, 2021), to explore the values, beliefs and attitudes of individuals who are born during the same period and who have experienced the same life events while growing up. Generational cohorts often seem to share similar perspectives and presumptions about certain issues (such as voluntary simplicity) and were therefore deemed a thought-provoking basis for this study. The

argument put forward is that age and membership to a specific generational cohort may influence consumer behaviour and thus could impact an individual's engagement in voluntary simplistic practices. For these reasons, the research presented in this study adopts the GCT assumptions to explore various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour, based on data that was gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Recently, there has been a tendency towards being more reflective about consumption choices and an increasing number of consumers are devoting more thought toward their personal purchasing habits. Consumers also seem to be conveying more environmental and social concerns when making clothing consumption decisions (Inanova *et al*., 2019). As pointed out by Chang (2018), necessity and societal problems could represent a strong influential force behind voluntary simplistic consumption practices. He argues that the serious threat of environmental pollution and degradation as well as other issues may motivate consumers to be more ecologically conscious, more prudent about utilising resources and more concerned with social purposes – this may even apply to those individuals who are not intentionally pursuing a voluntary simplistic lifestyle (Chang, 2018; Elgin & Mitchell, 1977). Nonetheless, with regard to clothing consumption, consumers may decide to reduce their consumption and/or choose local, sustainable, and ethical alternatives, all of which comply with voluntary simplistic principles (Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). Yet, one has to question, whether all consumers, of all age groups are equally persuaded to adopt voluntary simplistic principles in their clothing consumption practices.

The consumer market today consists of several generations of consumers, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Membership to specific generational cohorts may fulfil a significant role in describing different consumer behaviours and trends, including those related to the principle of sustainable consumption and voluntary simplicity, which has become a prominent subject globally. As suggested by the Generational Cohort Theory, consumer behaviour differs between various cohorts born in different time periods. Due to the current complexity of consumption patterns displayed by different generational cohorts, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, manufacturers and suppliers are facing difficulty in understanding the consequences of consumer behaviour dynamics in the market (Bathmanathan & Rajadurai, 2017; Zwanka & Buff, 2021). Cohen (2020) is of the opinion that the pandemic triggered enduring transitions in consumer behaviour, which may have also included an overall decrease in consumption (Cambefort, 2020). While it is not entirely clear how consumer behaviour may have evolved since the pandemic, there remains a consistent need for

research to assist marketers in properly devising suitable marketing strategies based on a solid understanding of various generational cohorts' demand for more sustainable, and by implication, voluntary simplistic alternatives (Chaney *et al.*, 2017).

Some research has explored the application of the GCT as a basis of market segmentation, which offers an alternative to approaches that are purely based on aggregated demographic factors such as age, gender, and income (Hung, Gu & Yim, 2007). GCT extends age segmentation by focusing on the homogeneity within generational cohorts and also considering the differences that may prevail across different generational cohorts due to their experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes, which ultimately shape their behaviour (Chaney *et al.*, 2017). To date, the concept of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption has not yet been comprehensively explored among various generational cohorts, especially in the local South African context. Therefore, *this research aims to explore generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the local South African context.*

Moreover, no research could be found regarding consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, amid the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have, for example, triggered reduced consumption practices. It should therefore be noted that this study is based on a dataset that was gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may serve as an important basis for future longitudinal studies that are focused on understanding how voluntary simplistic clothing consumption may have changed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In a review of literature surrounding voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour, Cinar (2020) highlights, amongst others, a relationship between voluntary simplicity and variables such as socio-demographic characteristics, environmental movements, consumers' attitudes, and shopping motivations. This resembles the findings of previous research into the influential factors of pro-environmental behaviour and green consumption practices, which identified various factors ranging from personal level of demographic and psychological variables to a macro level of social and cultural alignments (Nguyen *et al.*, 2017). Socio-demographics such as age, gender, income, education and social status are therefore still used as a point of interest when profiling green consumers and green purchase behaviour (Kumar, 2014).

The findings of this study could similarly be used practically to profile local consumers who engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour and provide marketers with guidelines to refine marketing strategies, specifically in terms of specific generational cohorts, who engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption. For many years, the issue of

standardisation or adaptation of marketing strategies across various markets has been a topic of much debate (Brei, Camargo & Engels, 2011). The homogeneity of consumer attitudes and preferences across national boundaries and within the emerging market context of South Africa is consistently drawn into question and with that, similarities and differences among various generational cohorts. Thus, in order to better understand the local consumer population and more specifically distinctions between generational cohorts, empirical investigation as proposed in this study is of much value in advancing efficient marketing strategies in the local marketplace.

From a theoretical point of view, limited research has focused on consumers' tendency to engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, very few, if any studies have taken on a generational cohort perspective on consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the local context. This constitutes a gap in current literature. Therefore, the findings of this research can deliver important theoretical insight and evidence about the voluntary simplistic clothing consumption habits of various generational cohorts during the pandemic, particularly within the local South African emerging market context. The findings can serve as a baseline for future empirical investigation to establish how clothing consumption patterns may have evolved since the pandemic. In addition, applying the Generational Cohort Theory as a theoretical basis for the study will furthermore expand our understanding of relevant theories to interpret voluntary simplistic and sustainable consumption behaviour.

## 1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to explore the differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, particularly amidst the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research objectives are specified as follows:

**Objective 1:** To explore and describe consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. The following voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices were identified based on prior empirical research (Reis, 2019; Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019) and further investigated in this study:

1.1 Ethical clothing consumption
1.2 Acquisition of environmentally friendly produced clothing
1.3 Clothing longevity and repurposed clothing consumption
1.4 Unique handcrafted clothing consumption
1.5 Need-based (reduced) clothing consumption

**Objective 2**: To determine the differences in the various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory. The generational cohorts of interest in this study include the following:

2.1 Baby Boomers
2.2 Generation X
2.3 Generation Y
2.4 Generation Z

## 1.5 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this study were addressed by employing an existing data set that was gathered in 2021 by the University of Pretoria's Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students. The sample of this study comprised both male and female respondents who belong to various population groups and who, for this study, had to be 18 years and older. With the intention of portraying the larger South African population, diverse population groups, including Asian, Black, Coloured, Indian, and White respondents, were recruited for the survey. Furthermore, the respondents were not restricted in terms of specific household incomes or levels of education. The data was derived from an online questionnaire and presented in numeric format thereby adopting a quantitative approach (Salkind, 2012). The research design for this current study is exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory research can be described as

research that is initiated to gather more data on a particular matter that is not yet well-known (Fouché, De Vos & Schurink, 2011). Descriptive research, on the other hand, is elementary as it explains rather than investigates. In other words, it provides answers to proposed questions like who, what, when, where and how (Fouché *et al.*, 2011).

For this study, an initial analysis will include descriptive statistics, which entails frequencies, percentages and means regarding the demographic profile of the sample. Following the descriptive analysis, inferential statistical analysis will be performed including exploratory factor analysis (Centobelli *et al.*, 2022) and one-way analysis of variances (Inanova *et al.*, 2019) to detect the significance of differences in the various generational cohorts' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices.

## 1.6 DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

**TABLE 1.1: Definitions of terms and concepts**

| Term or Concept | Definition | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Consumer behaviour | Consumer behaviour encompasses the processes that consumers utilise to select, use and dispose of products. | (Noel, 2018) |
| Ecological awareness | Ecological awareness describes the interconnectedness between people and the environment with all its natural resources | (Leonard-Barton, 1981) |
| Exploratory Factor Analysis (Centobelli *et al.*, 2022) | EFA includes the use of statistical computer software in order to uncover undetected or underlying factors that are present in the raw data. | (Mazzocchi, 2008). |
| Fast fashion | Low-cost clothing produced at a rapid rate by mass-market brands in response to the latest trends. | (Zamani, Sandin & Peters, 2017) |
| Generational cohorts | Individuals in a mutual age group and where those individuals share a defined history that influences their personalities, behaviour, and/or consumption patterns. | (Strauss & Howe, 1991) |
| Generational Cohort Theory | This theory proposes that individuals who experience and live through similar historical, social, cultural, political and economic events during the coming-of-age period, will share common core values and behaviours throughout their lives | (Mannheim, 1970) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Green consumption | Green consumption refers to consumption patterns that ease environmental pressure, such as conserving water and encouraging the recycling of product packaging. | (Kazdin, 2009) |
| Human scale | The human scale focuses on smaller organisations, that offer their workers better working and environmental conditions in the clothing manufacturing industry. | (Leonard-Barton, 1981) |
| Material simplicity | Material simplicity is characterised by a choice to maintain a simple and minimalistic lifestyle in which buying goods that seem unnecessary is limited and the focus is shifted toward acquiring goods purely based on necessity. | |
| One-way analysis of variances (Inanova *et al.*, 2019) | ANOVA is described as an alternative approach to mean comparison for multiple groups. In other words, it tests the significance of group differences between two or more groups. | (Mazzocchi, 2008). |
| Self-determination | Self-determination entails the thought of controlling one's own future and not relying on excessively high financial incomes and lifestyles. In other words, it encapsulates a strong desire to steer your own future and to be, for the most part, independent of organisations. | (Leonard-Barton, 1981; Reis, 2019) |
| Slow fashion | The goal of slow fashion is to reduce waste and keep materials as near as possible to the cycle of production and consumption. | (Centobelli *et al.*, 2022) |
| Sustainable clothing consumption | Consumption that supports current and future generations' abilities to fulfil their material and other needs without endangering the environment or disrupting the functioning of natural systems. It also refers to goods that support a sustainable future for humanity by benefiting society and the environment throughout production and consumption processes. | (Jackson, 2004; Wei & Jung, 2017) |
| Voluntary simplicity | Voluntary simplicity is focused on the idea of a simple life that is centered around the | (Elgin & Mitchell, 1977) |

## 1.7 PRESENTATION AND OUTLINE OF STUDY

**CHAPTER 1** presents the background of the study, highlighting consumers' excessive clothing consumption, both locally and abroad, and the resulting environmental issues and pressure imposed on natural resources due to the increasing production, use and disposal of garments. The chapter further elaborates on the concept of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour and emphasises generational cohorts as an important focal point of this study. The research problem, the justification of the study, the overall aim and objectives of the research, in addition to a brief overview of the research design and methodology as well as the definitions of important terms and concepts are key sections of this chapter. The subsequent chapters can be outlined as follows:

**CHAPTER 2** presents relevant literature surrounding the research problem and objectives of the study. The chapter commences with an overview of the environmental and social issues in the fashion industry and the implications of fast fashion. The chapter then also provides a broader overview of topics surrounding voluntary simplistic clothing consumption, generational cohorts and the GCT that serves as a basis for this study. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework that summarises the main concepts of the study and outlines the objectives in relation to the conceptual framework.

**CHAPTER 3** provides more insight into the research approach and design, the sample and sampling techniques, research instrument development, data collection and data analysis. An operationalization table outlines the study's objectives, constructs, dimensions, indicators, and method of analysis. Efforts to enhance the validity and reliability of the results are discussed, which is then followed by a concluding section on ethical issues.

**CHAPTER 4** presents the results, interpretations, and findings of the study. This chapter describes the sample's demographic characteristics by means of descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages that are reported in tables and graphs. The sections that follow include more advanced statistical analyses including EFA and ANOVA to determine statistically significant differences in generational cohorts' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour.

**CHAPTER 5** entails the conclusions and interpretations of the most prominent findings. Thereafter, the practical implications of the findings are discussed, research limitations are noted and suggestions for future research are presented.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a background and introduction to the research study. The introductory section explained, in brief, the study's theoretical foundation and the necessity of adopting voluntary simplistic practices in the clothing domain. Attention is drawn to the need to examine potential differences and/ or similarities of different generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary, simple apparel consumption behaviours in the local setting. The chapter's final sections give a succinct overview of the research design, methods, main ideas, and subsequent chapters. The following chapter will include a thorough review of the literature that was deemed essential in building the theoretical basis for this investigation.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is recognised as one of the most polluting industries in the world and is frequently associated with ethical misconduct in its production sector, specifically referring to labour-intensive and minimum wage arrangements. The clothing industry has thus become the central point of much social- and environmental concern on a global scale (Arrigo, 2013). Given the critique directed toward the fashion industry as one of the most socially and environmentally irresponsible industries globally, change is much needed. Consumers' consumption practices are fundamental and closely intertwined with how companies perform and act. Thus, the relevance of sustainability initiatives and the key role of consumers in supporting such initiatives in the clothing industry is irrefutable. In recent years, consumers are reported to have higher levels of general awareness and concern, despite not always being converted into actual practices (Pereira *et al.*, 2021). With the latter in mind, the review of this literature will expand on the concept of sustainability as it relates to the global clothing and textile industry and then further highlight the significance of voluntary simplistic initiatives in the fashion retail sector. Voluntary simplicity is further discussed in terms of its dimensions, specifically, those that relate to earlier scholarly contributions (e.g. Elgin & Mitchell, 1977), which include material simplicity, ecological awareness, self-determination and human scale, yet also highlighting further dimensions and practices that are relevant in the South African fashion industry as identified by Reis (2019) as well as Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019). The review will further delve into a discussion of the potential differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic consumption practices. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework that draws together the main concepts of the study and further positions the research objectives that were formulated for the study amid the interrelationship of these key concepts.

## 2.2 IMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH FAST FASHION AND THE BROADER IMPACT OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Globally, the fashion industry is recognised as a trillion-dollar industry (Gazzola *et al.*, 2020), which is fueled, in part, by fast fashion. Fast fashion can be viewed as a business model that has gained substantial momentum in the clothing industry over the past few decades and has since led to the current status quo of overconsumption (Niinimäki *et al.*, 2020). This model conveys severe risks for the environment including human health and is implemented at the cost of many vulnerable communities and resources. Amongst others, fast fashion has contributed to the growth of water-intensive fibres, higher emissions of untreated dyes and other chemicals into local water sources, unfair labour wages and poor working conditions (Bick, Halsey & Ekenga, 2018). The fast fashion industry is commonly considered one of the worst offenders in the sustainability domain due to its substantial volume and the short lifecycles of consumer products (Lambert, 2014). Although fast fashion is not a new concept, it has in recent years most certainly increased pressure on the clothing industry to produce and manufacture more volume. The excessive production processes have threatened the environment, and the livelihoods of certain communities (e.g. cheaply produced imports may lead to the closure of local manufacturing facilities), which emphasises the need for sustainable practices to prevent or combat its impact (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Even though the fashion industry plays a significant part in the world economy by providing employment, trade and income, it is apparent that these benefits often come at the expense of the employees' welfare, and the overall state of the environment (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2016).

Based on the aforementioned background, it becomes apparent that efforts are needed throughout the global fashion industry towards promoting more sustainable practices. Overall, the principle of sustainability has gained amplified global attention in recent years and is an appropriate topic to consider in the clothing industry as it is proven to be one of the most polluting industries worldwide, with significant environmental, social and economic influence (Pereira *et al.*, 2021). Pereira *et al.* (2021) for example highlight the fact that greenhouse gas emissions in the fashion industry account for a substantial part of global carbon emissions, owing to the considerable energy usage during production, manufacturing and transportation. Recognition of these dire environmental consequences has led to a greater uptake of pro-environmental initiatives by many companies to reverse their impact on the environment through the adoption of a variety of sustainable principles such as circular economy, fair trade, sharing economy and also more innovative ways of value creation where sustainability is the main goal (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Consumers play a significant role in the endorsement and

realisation of such sustainable initiatives. In fact, consumers may often set the pace and provide directives for many companies on the principles they should adopt and apply (Pereira *et al.*, 2021).

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in consumers' awareness of the impact of the fashion industry and the repercussions of excessive consumption (Pereira *et al.*, 2021). A greater consciousness of the implications of excessive consumption seems to have specifically come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic because of, amongst other, resource scarcities. Some argue that COVID-19 may have even elicited a more pronounced transition to sustainable consumption (Cinar, 2020; Cohen, 2020). Amid the repercussions of the pandemic, voluntary simplicity, in particular, is believed to have gained momentum as a sustainable alternative for consumers to demonstrate environmentally and socially conscious efforts (Cinar, 2020). A sense of urgency and societal problems is said to be a solid driving force behind voluntary simplicity, including the difficult transition to an economy based on renewable energy resources and the sustainable use of material resources to satisfy human needs. The immense threat that is posed by current environmental and societal issues may motivate consumers to be more ecologically conscious, more careful in resource use and also more concerned with social purposes in their general consumption choices (Cinar, 2020; Pantano *et al.*, 2020), but also more specifically in their clothing consumption.

## 2.3 SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING CONSUMPTION BASED ON THE IDEOLOGY OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Vesterinen and Syrjälä (2022), in their extensive review of 58 studies, identify two types of overarching sustainable clothing consumption behaviours. The first involves buying sustainable alternatives with pro-environmental and social product features, whereas the second type of behaviour involves anti-consumption and the reduction of personal consumption through ideologies such as slow fashion and voluntary simplicity. Slow fashion and voluntary simplicity are closely related since both ideologies include dimensions such as the support of craftmanship and locally produced goods as well as the purposeful extension of the lifespan of products and lowered consumption (Vesterinen & Syrjälä, 2022). While slow fashion mainly revolves around clothing consumption (Fletcher, 2010; Jung & Jin, 2014), voluntary simplicity represents an entire lifestyle approach which not only impacts clothing consumption, but also other consumption spheres (Reis, 2019), and dates further back in history than slow fashion.

Voluntary simplicity is a concept first brought to light in 1936 and was defined as choosing the straightforwardness of sincerity and purpose while avoiding the clutter of having many material possessions irrelevant to one's life's (Kasser, 2009). Chang (2018) further describes voluntary simplicity as a lifestyle and is considered a type of ethical consumer behaviour. Consumers who choose to adopt this lifestyle are willing to reduce their material consumption to free up resources, particularly time and money. This can also more specifically relate to their clothing consumption. Voluntary simplicity can be depicted as an encompassing ethical consumer behaviour that is propelled by social responsibility and self-consciousness (Chang, 2018). In addition, voluntary simplicity behaviours entail ecological ideas, social responsibility and community. There are numerous elements with consequences that form underlying components of voluntary simplicity, such as resource conservation, waste reduction and ecological impacts (McDonald *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, efforts of voluntary simplicity that strongly react to environmental and ethical concerns could be viewed as a form of ethical and sustainable behaviour (Shaw & Newholm, 2002).

Studies have assessed how consideration for future consequences and human values influence consumers' willingness to adopt voluntary simplicity and what factors determine these behavioural dispositions (Chang, 2018). Rich, Wright and Bennett (2020) argue that people who live a voluntary simplistic lifestyle are generally unceremoniously identified through their use of tools and strategies that reflect less materialistic and/ or simplistic consumption practices. Voluntary simplifiers, in other words, tend to reduce their overall expenditures (Cambefort, 2020). They may for example also decide to purchase products that are produced locally rather than buying international brands. Elgin and Mitchell (1977), who are seminal authors on the topic of voluntary simplicity, identified some of the main dimensions that are associated with voluntary simplicity, of which the following are of particular interest for this study: material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness, and human scale. These aspects are identified as distinctive ways in which consumers can embrace voluntary simplicity and live a basic, simple lifestyle seeking to reduce their material consumption to find satisfaction in non-material ways (Chang, 2018). Studying these dimensions is beneficial in gaining a deeper understanding of consumers' motivations to adopt voluntary simplistic consumption practices, and also more specifically, how it may translate into sustainable clothing consumption practices.

### 2.3.1 Embracing material simplicity in clothing consumption practices

Material simplicity is characterised by a choice to maintain a simple and minimalistic lifestyle in which buying goods that seem unnecessary is avoided, and overall consumption is limited

to what is absolutely necessary (Reis, 2019). Consumers may realise that the external and materialistic aspect of their lives - involving ownership of things that they don't really need - does not necessarily contribute to their well-being and may even cause them discontent. Individuals who grasp that excessive consumption behaviours do not necessarily contribute to their own and others' best interests, will then rather choose to discern and make choices that involve the lowest cost to others and the environment (Pravet & Holmlund, 2018).

Since voluntary simplicity is aligned with reduced consumption, it requires questioning why an individual would acquire and consume a particular product in the first place. Consumption is argued to be associated with a needs-based understanding, in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). With this understanding, the everyday use of clothing must fulfil a basic need for protection, although its further role in realising consumers' social and status needs is not discounted (Pravet & Holmlund, 2018). However, in realising such needs, it is done without demanding excessive utilisation of resources and safeguarding the interests of the larger community. From a clothing perspective, needs-based design processes may entail improving the actual longevity of garments whilst addressing the emotional qualities clothing adds to consumers' lives (McGrath, 2012). This requires designers and retailers to extensively engage with the physical dimensions of a product such as the quality of materials and its resource efficiency while still being mindful of any other consumer needs and then devising applicable non-material satisfiers (McGrath, 2012).

### 2.3.2 Ecological awareness in clothing consumption practices

Ecological awareness describes the interconnectedness between people and the environment with all its natural resources (Leonard-Barton, 1981). Leonard-Barton (1981), who was one of the first scholars to develop a lifestyle index for voluntary simplicity, emphasises the importance of people's understanding of their reliance on natural resources and the impact they have on it. In terms of apparel behaviour, it may involve a preference for clothing that seeks to minimize any negative effect it may have on the environment, employee welfare and other relevant aspects (Raciniewska, 2014). The concept of ethical clothing is multi-dimensional, and academics have operationalised it in many different ways focusing on various influential determinants. A multidimensional approach is often considered a more appropriate approach because more distinctive measures may deliver varying attitudinal and behavioural results (Reimers *et al.*, 2016).

Current literature reveals that ethical clothing consumption falls into four major areas that encompass environmental responsibility, employee welfare, slow fashion and animal welfare.

This encompasses an understanding of the environmental damage caused by the fashion industry in ways such as resource depletion, pollution and overuse of chemicals (Raciniewska, 2014). However, organic clothing, for example, serves as a means to reverse this impact. This considers clothing produced from natural materials such as cotton, hemp and silk that are produced in a certified organic manner. Organic clothing differs from conventional clothing in that it is cultivated through methods that are free from pesticides, herbicides and other chemical fertilizers that harm the environment. Moreover, organic cotton is specifically produced without pollutant byproducts such as bleach and utilizes less water (Reimers *et al.*, 2016).

The ecological awareness dimension of voluntary simplicity incorporates further concepts and methods relating to eco-friendly disposal which entails notions such as reusing or repurposing clothing consumption as well as buying second-hand clothing (Meyer, 2013). Bhatt, Silverman and Dickson (2019) defined repurposed clothing as a practical way to help reduce the depletion of resources while lowering the generation of additional textile waste. This includes initiatives such as upcycling where something useless gets refashioned into something useful without wasting raw materials and/or without any input from non-renewable resources (Wilson, 2016). Concerning the second-hand fashion industry, much growth has occurred over the past few years (Zaman *et al.*, 2019). This growth can in part be attributed to concern over large volumes of discarded garments finding their way to landfills, which as a result has a significantly negative impact on society's well-being and the environment (Bhatt *et al.*, 2019). The second-hand clothing trade extends the lifespan of garments, but Brooks (2015) warns that the exploitative system of fast fashion and the rapid growth of the second-hand fashion industry may further fuel already deeply rooted issues surrounding textile waste and international inequalities. In a more positive light, Brooks (2015) noted that consumers are gradually becoming aware that there is an environmental and social crisis in the industry with too much low-quality and cheap clothing that is produced in unfair and unsafe work conditions that are exploitative to many vulnerable communities. As a result, there has been growing interest in sustainable consumption practices which embrace recycling, upcycling and repurposing (Zaman *et al.*, 2019). Such behaviour requires a degree of self-determination, which is another important dimension of voluntary simplicity.

### 2.3.3 Employing self-determination in clothing consumption practices

Self-determination entails the thought of controlling one's future and not depending on the consequences of a high financial lifestyle (Reis, 2019). Elgin and Mitchell (1977) describe this dimension according to an individual's tendencies to focus on inner growth to fulfil a personal-centred approach to living. In other words, these consumers tend to have a strong desire to

control their own lives and be, for the most part, independent of organisations (Leonard-Barton, 1981).

In the context of clothing consumption, consumers may demonstrate self-support by making their own clothes, repairing garments, upcycling and recycling clothes rather than throwing them away or buying new items i.e., practices that strongly link with ecological awareness. Furthermore, Bhatt *et al.* (2019) suggest that upcycling clothing could be a solution that allows brands and consumers to recreate or repurpose old clothing to control the volumes of used clothing that ends up in the waste stream. This will not only have positive consequences for the environment but may also serve as a vehicle of social upliftment for individuals who engage in such practices to generate income.

### 2.3.4 Considering the human scale in clothing consumption practices

The human scale dimension of voluntary simplicity focuses on smaller-scale organisations that offer better working and environmental conditions for workers (Leonard-Barton, 1981; Reis, 2019), which is a particularly contentious issue in the clothing manufacturing industry. The human scale dimension is typically reflected in the behaviour of individuals who desire to purchase products from smaller-scale companies, thereby acting more responsibly within their communities by supporting local entrepreneurs and artisans/ designers who create unique handcrafted apparel items. It is argued that appreciation of human scale manifests in the support of locally produced products, because such support may not only add value to social causes in supporting local communities and entrepreneurs but also positively contribute to the preservation of the environment by reducing air pollution and minimising the ecological footprint associated with imported goods (Huneke, 2005). This voluntary simplistic dimension is particularly important in the local context. Supporting small-scale and local companies could encourage ethically sound working conditions and empower the South African community that struggles with undeniable unemployment and poverty issues. For example, supporting Proudly South African products creates more prospects for new local designers and self- employment opportunities that better the country's economic growth. In addition, supporting local rather than imported goods, directly and indirectly, benefits the environment by acquiring a product that has a lower ecological footprint due to less transportation emissions.

Additionally, the human scale dimension also draws into question exploitative work practices that have become an unfortunate trait of the global fashion industry (Armstrong *et al.*, 2016). The production processes linked to fast fashion frequently occur in developing countries due to their low labour costs (Hurley & Miller, 2008). Fast fashion requires supply chains that

manufacture fashionable clothing in rapid response to consumer demand. As a countermeasure, many companies and retailers have advocated slow fashion. Slow fashion shifts consumers' attitudes from quantity to quality, hence reducing production processes and buying frequencies. As a further example, acquiring uniquely handcrafted artisanal products can have a positive social impact by minimising production and consumption and supporting local communities. Slowing down the amount and speed of production cycles alleviates pressure to meet short production deadlines, and may simultaneously improve employee welfare (Reimers *et al.*, 2016).

In summary, all of the voluntary simplistic dimensions add positive social and environmental outcomes and should therefore be encouraged. However, not all consumer groups may be equally receptive to all of the suggested voluntary simplistic dimensions and clothing practices. While consumers are said to increasingly care about unethical behaviour, it is often reported that their attitudes do not always translate into actual behavioural change, which may be attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding the negative effects of the fashion industry (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Yet, there may also be other factors at play. The degree to which consumers embrace voluntary simplicity and sustainable clothing consumption practices may vary greatly from one segment to another. For these reasons, marketing practitioners and other relevant stakeholders must constantly endeavour to understand the background of these various consumer groups to effectively communicate and promote the benefits of sustainable alternatives. One approach, that may clearly have value in understanding consumers' background and their subsequent behaviours is related to their age and their affiliation to a particular generational cohort.

As reported in multiple studies (Kumar, 2014; Marjanen *et al.*, 2019; Nguyen *et al.*, 2017), age and other demographic factors such as gender, population groups, income and level of education could influence consumers' perceptions about many issues, but also more specifically their acceptance of sustainable alternatives and voluntary simplistic consumption practices. In addition, marketing segmentation remains a crucial part of understanding and influencing consumer behaviour (Eger *et al.*, 2021). Likewise, the utilisation of generation cohorts as a segmentation approach has gained momentum in recent years and is said to be most useful due to the relative homogeneity within generations, also considering the relative differences across these generations. In this regard, the Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) may be of much value in serving as an underlying theoretical basis for this study that is focused on exploring the differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour.

## 2.4 THE GENERATIONAL COHORT THEORY (GCT)

The Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) represents a broader theoretical perspective than the classical one-dimensional age-based segmentation approach (Chaney *et al.*, 2017). The theory was first brought to light in Mannheim's essay entitled 'The Problem of Generations' and was regarded as the most systematic and fully developed categorisation of generations from a sociological perspective at the point in time when it was first developed, as it describes generations within a broader socio-historical context (Mannheim, 1970; Pilcher, 1994). Strauss and Howe (1991) adapted Mannheim's theory of generations and further extended the theory to incorporate a repetitive cycle of age cohorts/ generations with particular behavioural patterns that are deemed as interconnected with their history and the history of their community. Subsequently, generational cohorts are described as groups of individuals who are born during a particular time period and who share the same social characteristics and historical experiences (Inanova *et al.*, 2019). Individuals are thus affiliated to a particular cohort based on their year of birth with a gap of 20-25 years between the various generation cohorts (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

The core assumption of GCT is that individuals who experience and live through the same and similar historical, social, cultural, political and economic events during the coming-of-age period, will share common core values and behaviours throughout their lives (Mannheim, 1970). It is further argued that it is important for individuals to experience these key social changes when they are young to produce a shared generational consciousness (Schuman & Scott, 1989). The GCT has been extensively applied by various scholars (e.g. Bathmanathan *et al.*, 2018; Chaney *et al.*, 2017; Eger *et al.*, 2021) based on the idea that individuals born during the same period and maturing through the same life events will share similar values, beliefs and attitudes, including presumptions that are consistent among members of a particular generational cohort. It is argued that generational cohorts' experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes are what shape their behaviours (Chaney *et al.*, 2017).

Based on their research, Eger *et al.* (2021) concluded that there are notable behavioural differences and similarities between generational cohorts. Studies by Eger *et al.* (2021), as well as Zwanka and Buff (2021), also report distinct changes in consumer behaviour and habits that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically highlighting differences among generation cohorts' behaviour during this time. It is therefore feasible to argue that affiliation to a particular generational cohort may explain underlying motivations for the adoption of certain consumption behaviours, including voluntary simplistic clothing

consumption practices. Against this backdrop, the following sections highlight four generational cohorts, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z - based on the categorisation of Strauss and Howe (1991) - that were of particular interest in this study.

### 2.4.1 Baby Boomers

"Baby Boomers" is the generational cohort born between the years of 1946 and 1964 (Schewe, Meredith & Noble, 2000). Baby Boomers are frequently characterized as rather personal, competitive free agents with distinctive interests in self-fulfilment through personal growth (Eger *et al.*, 2021; Joung, 2021). Personal growth is a dimension closely associated with voluntary simplicity (Reis, 2019; Elgin & Mitchell, 1977). In addition to personal growth, this cohort is highly educated, hardworking, and has considerably high job involvement, resulting in a high degree of career success (Joung, 2021). As they age, the Baby Boomers become wealthier, increasing their purchasing power (Fowler *et al*., 2014). They are known to be "digital immigrants" as they were not born into the digital world and thus often prefer more traditional methods of communication and buying. Baby Boomers are therefore more likely to shop at a brick-and-mortar store, considering shop location and shopping convenience (Eger *et al.*, 2021). According to the International Council of Shopping Centres, Baby Boomers are the largest spenders at malls and department stores (Fowler *et al*., 2014). They would potentially prioritise reliable, fairly priced and budget-friendly products. They are additionally described as a family, financially and medically focused, and tend to choose products that make their lives easier and save them time (Eger *et al.*, 2021).

In terms of clothing consumption practices, prior empirical evidence gathered in more developed countries reveals that Baby Boomers can influence others through consumption and trendsetting and are receptive to new products and services (Joung, 2021). They are knowledgeable shoppers who have the financial resources to purchase a broad range of products. However, some studies have revealed that Baby Boomers participate significantly less in textile recycling compared to Generation X and Y, but results still seem somewhat inconclusive as other empirical evidence seems to suggest that older adults were more likely to participate in textile recycling (Koch & Domina, 2009).

### 2.4.2 Generation X

Individuals who form part of Generation X were born between 1965 and 1980 and grew up on the verge of the information age (Chaney *et al.*, 2017; Schewe *et al.*, 2000). Information and communications technology had just started to develop. Compared to Baby Boomers, Generation X are therefore more competent and comfortable with computer-mediated

communication and other concepts related to information technology (Eger *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, Gen X is not as closely connected to social media and is less exposed to messages pertaining to various products and services online (Inanova et al., 2019). This generation is recognized for their efforts in the anti-apartheid movement and their subsequent struggles to find their place in society in post-apartheid South Africa (Duh & Struwig, 2015). Schewe et al. (2013)explain that sustainability, saving, and politics are significant concerns for this generation.

Generation X consumers are described as “sophisticated” and seem to prefer products and marketing messages that are designed specifically for their needs and tasks that they have in mind (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). They are seemingly focused on customer convenience as well as community relations. Furthermore, this cohort is price- conscious and thus has a low price sensitivity (Eger *et al.*, 2021). However, Generation X are also more responsible consumers than their younger counterparts and focus on specific product categories, such as recycled paper products and eco-friendly detergents.

### 2.4.3 Generation Y

Generation Y (better known as “Millennials”) were born between 1981 and 1997. Members of this generational cohort are described as confident, ambitious and achievement-oriented (Eger *et al.*, 2021). They are considered well-informed concerning recent news and incessantly look for changes and innovations, which contributes to the fact that they often make purchase decisions based on prior research and relative knowledge of a topic (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Members of this generation prefer online shopping due to the range of benefits they can obtain via online offerings, such as convenient ordering, delivery and cheaper prices, compared to shopping at traditional brick-and-mortar stores (Eger *et al.*, 2021). Millennial consumers seem to devote their spending to more personal or digitalised services than to apparel, but they will be more likely to seek out brand-specific products (Eger *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, compared to older generations, millennials tend to have a higher tendency to hoard items (Joung, 2021).

Consumption patterns, especially among the younger Generation Y cohort, have evolved due to the breakdown of geographical boundaries and higher disposable incomes. Empirical research that have been generated abroad suggest that this group of individuals generally enjoys shopping and has a considerable amount of disposable income, which they are likely to spend impulsively due to having a lot of free time (Joung, 2021). Locally, the cash-driven purchasing power of the youth market, which makes up 35% of the population, is significant. In South Africa, Generation Y have an estimated disposable income of around R120-billion (Crouth, 2021). It is reported that this generation’s purchasing power may grow stronger in the future. In fact, an impressive 63% of them are already actively saving and investing.

Additionally, 10% of young adults have found entrepreneurial ways to earn an income (Crouth, 2021).

Additionally, they are always on the lookout for the latest trends, and as a result, they purchase more fashion items than their older counterparts (Joung, 2021). If they choose to shop at brick-and-mortar stores rather than online, they prefer to shop in a variety of stores rather than sticking to one particular mall (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Overall, Generation Y is said to be purchasing and consuming more, demanding more and living on a higher debt-to-equity ratio (Hume, 2010). Excessive consumption is known to be a key contributor to environmental issues and an unsustainable trajectory (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). However, Millennials are also well-informed and aware of the issues concerning the environment, therefore they are also expected to adopt behaviours that will support sustainable development (Bonera, Codini & Miniero, 2020; Inanova *et al.*, 2019). Generation Y members rely heavily on social media platforms for socialising and in so doing, are constantly exposed to social and environmental issues (Joung, 2021).

### 2.4.4 Generation Z

Generation Z, born between 1998 and 2012, is also known as “Gen Next”. Members of this generation are the most educated, mobile and connected consumers compared to the latter generations mentioned (Eger *et al.*, 2021). Generation Z is characterized as socially conscious individuals, acutely innovative and seeking permanent change in their lives. Additionally, they are significantly tech-savvy, thus very well-informed on recent trends and social causes (Chaney *et al.*, 2017). This younger generation’s consumers are arguably the most seriously concerned with both social and environmental causes. They tend to strongly support their beliefs with their shopping behaviour and habits and would favour brands that are correspondingly aligned with their values (Amed *et al.*, 2019). Recent reports reveal that 35% of Generation Z are invested in the environment and sustainability, despite the pandemic, whilst being increasingly inclined to accept a healthy lifestyle and assume more ethical choices (Nikolić *et al.*, 2022). Generation Z, additionally, is argued to envision actionable plans and measurable progress concerning sustainability (Joung, 2021).

Compared to other generations, Generation Z demonstrates a stronger connection between their beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. For example, when it comes to sustainable apparel products, younger generations assign higher value and express greater purchase intentions than their older counterparts (Lin & Chen, 2022). Today's youth are more conscious of sustainability and the circular economy. Additionally, younger generations are believed to hold stronger beliefs and intentions to purchase second-hand clothing than older generations

(Liang & Xu, 2018).

In the summary of the generational cohort discussion, when it comes to clothing consumption practices, Generation X and Baby Boomers differ in their priorities. Research has shown that Generation X places less importance on comfort, value, and quality, and instead values fashionable attire more highly, demonstrating a greater interest in keeping up with the latest trends (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Often described as sophisticated and cynical, Generation X tends to purchase high-quality products and is less swayed by fashion trends than Generation Y (Joung, 2021). Both Generation X and Generation Y tend to make impulsive fashion purchases (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Specifically relating to voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the local South African context, not much is known regarding any of the aforementioned cohorts' adoption of such behaviour, which necessitates further research and empirical insight. As noted in the introductory sections, such research can benefit from using the GCT as a theoretical basis for the interpretation of data. The section to follow will further explain the conceptual framework and research objectives that were formulated for the study.

## 2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The conceptual framework, depicted in **Figure 2.1**, is based on the literature reviewed in this chapter and illustrates the interrelatedness of the main concepts in this research study. The framework highlights the relevance of existing literature surrounding the dimensions that underlie a voluntary simplistic lifestyle and its potential manifestation in consumers' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour. Voluntary simplicity, as per the insights derived from seminal works such as Elgin and Mitchell (1977), involves various dimensions including material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness and human scale. These dimensions may lead to specific types of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour as per the insights of Reis (2019) as well as Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019), that include consumption practices such as the purchasing of ethically and locally produced clothing as well as clothing with eco-friendly and handcrafted attributes. It may also involve the repurposing of clothing items and/ or engaging in other practices that would ensure clothing longevity. Moreover, consumers may decide to reduce their overall clothing consumption and only acquire clothing based on necessity (Reis, 2019, Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019). Finally, the framework underlines a correlation and/or relationship between the generational cohorts and their engagement in VS clothing consumption practices. The extent to which consumers engage in these voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices may differ from one generational cohort to the next. Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Z, all live through certain

historical, social, cultural, political and economic events during the coming-of-age period, and will thus, based on the assumptions of GCT, share particular core values that impact their behaviour throughout their lifespan (Mannheim, 1970).

Additionally, data was collected during the unique and unusual situation of the COVID-19 crisis, which may have led individuals to question their buying decisions and motivated them to alter their consumption practices. It is still open to debate whether consumers who are affiliated with various generational cohorts have returned to their old consumption habits after the pandemic (Cambefort, 2020) or if the pandemic presented the opportunity and time to reflect and question unsustainable consumption practices and prompted these consumers to seek and adopt lasting sustainable alternatives (Sheth, 2020).

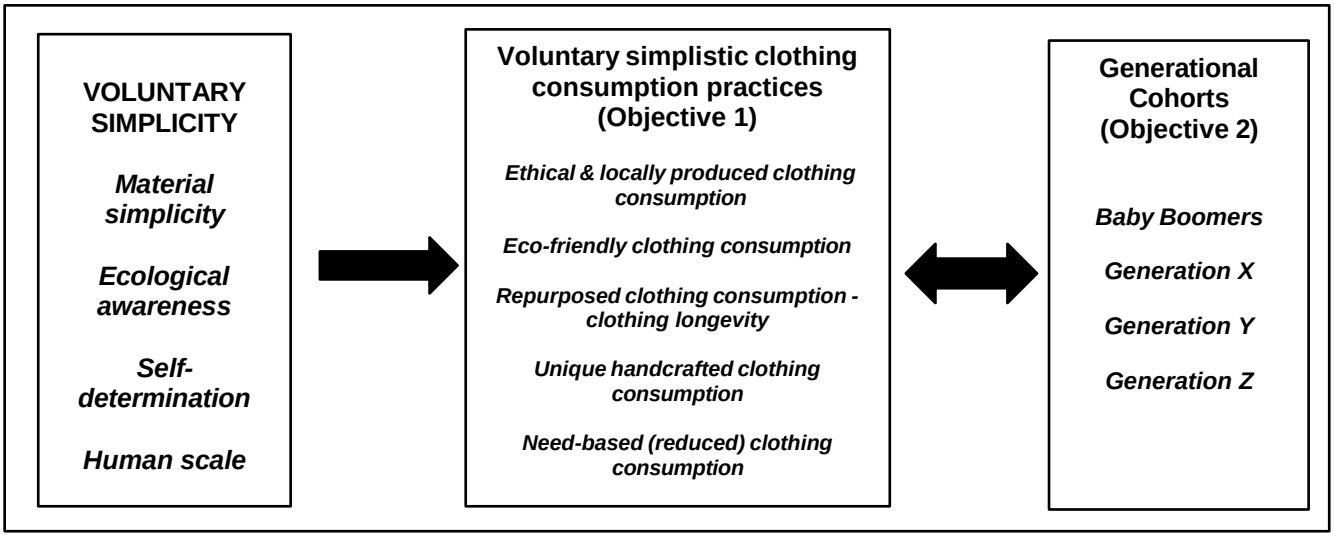


**FIGURE 2.1: Conceptual framework depicting a generational cohort perspective on voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices**

Based on the review of the literature and the accompanying conceptual framework for this study, research objectives were formulated as follows:

**Objective 1:** To explore and describe consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. The following voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices were identified based on prior empirical research (Reis, 2019; Taljaard & Sonnenberg, 2019) and further investigated in this study:

1.1 Ethical and locally produced clothing consumption
1.2 Acquisition of environmentally friendly produced clothing
1.3 Clothing longevity and repurposed clothing consumption
1.4 Unique handcrafted clothing consumption

1.5 Need-based (reduced) clothing consumption

**Objective 2**: To determine the differences in the various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the GCT. The generational cohorts of interest in this study include the following:

2.1 Baby Boomers
2.2 Generation X
2.3 Generation Y
2.5 Generation Z

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In recent years the general awareness of sustainability issues has progressively taken on a central role, altering consumers' views and accordingly influencing their purchasing choices and general consumption behaviour. Chapter two presented literature surrounding voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour, as well as the various dimensions associated with such behaviour including material simplicity, ecological awareness, self-determination, and human scale. Potential differences may exist in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. Focusing on Generations X, Y, Z and Baby Boomers, the GCT was introduced as an appropriate theoretical basis for this study to shed more light on how individuals' engagement in voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour may differ based on their affiliation to a particular generational cohort. The chapter concluded with a proposed conceptual framework for the study and the accompanying research objectives. The next chapter will focus on the methodology that was devised to accomplish the objectives of this study.

# CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology includes techniques that are implemented in the research process to collect and analyse data that can be used to gather appropriate information about certain research topics and draw appropriate conclusions from the results (Fouché *et al.*, 2011). The following chapter aims to introduce and explain the research design and methodology used for this particular study. The research design includes the specific methods that were used to obtain the data for this study, which was focused on exploring generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the South African context during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter also introduces and explains the sample and sampling techniques deemed applicable in achieving the objectives of this study. This is followed by a clarification of the research instrument that was developed and used to gather data, together with an overview of the data analysis procedures. An operationalisation table is included to summarise the study's objectives, together with the key constructs/ dimensions, accompanying scale items, and the method of analysis. The chapter is then concluded with an overview of measures that were taken to guarantee the quality of the data, i.e. validity and reliability, as well as the ethical considerations that were taken into consideration throughout the completion of this study.

## 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

As part of a larger ongoing research project, the data for this study was derived from an online survey questionnaire and presented in numeric format thereby adopting a quantitative approach (Salkind, 2012). A quantitative approach is the statistical, mathematical or numerical evaluation of data that was derived from the use of questionnaires or surveys (Öberseder *et al.*, 2014). The research design for this current study can be further described as exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory research can be described as research that is initiated to gather more data on a particular matter that is not yet well-known (Fouché *et al.*, 2011). Descriptive research, on the other hand, is elementary as it explains rather than investigates. In other words, it provides answers to proposed questions like who, what, when, where and how (Fouché *et al.*, 2011). In addition to the above, the study is categorized as cross-sectional as it is based on data that reflects one specific point in time (Fouché *et al*., 2011).

## 3.3 STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHODS

Objectives form the basis of any research by defining the subjects of study, either directly or indirectly. The study objectives determine the group to which research results can be applied, or for which the findings can be generalized. This group is commonly referred to as the population (Shukla, 2020). To add to the influence of gender and age, it is assumed that different population groups may have different perceptions and attitudes regarding voluntary simplicity. Given South Africa's multicultural heritage and composition (ExpatCapeTown, 2018), it is important to include individuals from different population groups. Consumers' buying behaviour is said to differ between different ethnic and cultural orientations, because underlying cultural values may impact consumers' responses and behaviour towards sustainability (Karaosman, Morales & Grijalvo, 2014).

The study population for this study included individuals who engage in clothing consumption behaviour and also more specifically voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the South African context. However, since there is no sampling frame identified for this study, the population remains undefined. Therefore, the sample of the study was recruited employing non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Non-probability sampling entails a more cost- and time-effective method of sampling through which samples are identified based on personal judgment or convenience (Salkind, 2012). As the label states, convenience sampling relies mainly on attaining respondents who are most conveniently accessible (Quinlan et al., 2019). Final-year Clothing Retail Management students were encouraged to reach out to their families, friends and other acquaintances to participate in the study via an online survey link that was forwarded to them. Snowball sampling entails recruiting respondents through information provided by the initial responses (Quinlan et al., 2019) i.e. students asked respondents, whom they initially approached to complete the survey, to also forward it to others who complied with the precondition for participation.

The eventual sample of this study comprised both male and female respondents who belonged to various population groups and who, for this study, had to be 18 years and older. The age precondition for participation assumed that the study participants would be able to independently engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour. Yet, it should be noted that respondents were not required to have any prior knowledge of the topic to enable them to participate in the study. The study additionally required the insight of both genders to allow for a balanced gender perspective on consumers' willingness to engage in voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour. The study was confined to the geographical scope of South Africa and therefore recruitment was restricted to respondents who resided within the borders

of South Africa. To reflect the larger population of South Africa, intentional effort was devoted toward recruiting a variety of population groups for the study including Asian, Black, Coloured, Indian and White respondents. Furthermore, the respondents were not restricted in terms of specific household incomes or levels of education to reflect a broader spectrum of the local consumer population.

Although sampling techniques such as convenience and snowball sampling have certain benefits and were considered appropriate for the exploratory purposes of this study, it is important to note that the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the larger population, due to the non-probability nature of the sampling techniques that were employed. However, the generated sample size was deemed sufficient for the purpose of this study. The sample size was dependent on the type of statistical procedures performed, which for this study was EFA and ANOVA. The technique of Exploratory Factor Analysis is typically used for larger sample sizes, with a minimum of n = 50 being considered reasonable (de Winter, Dodou & Wieringa, 2009).

## 3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The research instrument that was developed for this study was a structured, self-administered online questionnaire. Qualtrics software was utilised to develop and distribute the questionnaire via an online link. The questionnaire consisted of several sections to address the objectives of a larger research project. However, for this study, only specific sections were used. **Addendum A** includes the online survey questionnaire that was used to collect the data for this study.

The introductory section of the questionnaire explained the purpose and overarching topic of the study, providing contact details of the lead researcher and requesting informed consent from respondents to participate in the study. Thereafter, respondents were led to Section A of the questionnaire, which included two screening questions relating to age and residence in South Africa. This section was included to ensure that respondents complied with the preconditions of participation.

As pointed out earlier, Section E of the questionnaire specifically focused on voluntary simplistic (sustainable) clothing consumption practices. As explained in the literature review, the concept of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices is based on the ideology of sustainable clothing consumption. Hence, for the purposes of the questionnaire, the term “sustainable clothing behaviour” was used as opposed to “voluntary simplistic clothing behaviour” as more respondents might have been familiar with the concept of “sustainable” compared to “voluntary simplistic”. Prior to completing the question items included in this

section, respondents were given background on what “sustainable clothing consumption behaviour” is with accompanying images to enhance their understanding. The question items included in this section were derived from previous scale development efforts by Reis (2020), Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) and were anchored on a 5-point scale that measured the frequency of engagement ranging from “never” (1) to “almost always” (5).

At this point, it is important to note that the scale items that were generated for voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour by Reis (2020), Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) were patterned after the original voluntary simplistic behaviour index of Leonard-Barton (1981). However, Leonard-Barton’s (1981) voluntary simplistic measures were focused on energy conservation behaviour and therefore had to be adapted to more specifically measure consumers’ clothing consumption practices. Reis (2019) as well as Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) devoted much effort towards capturing all dimensions as specified by Leonard-Barton (1981) as well as Elgin and Mitchell (1977), but with a clothing perspective in mind. The resulting scale items thus reflect voluntary simplistic dimensions such as material simplicity (e.g. need-based and/or reduced clothing consumption), self-determination (e.g. efforts to repair/ repurpose clothing items rather than discarding them), ecological awareness (e.g. includes efforts to acquire and dispose of apparel in an eco-friendly manner) and human scale (e.g. support for local clothing brands, particularly those that adopt ethical/ fair labour practices and an appreciation for handcrafted items).

Section H of the questionnaire captured demographic variables such as gender, age, income, education, population group and geographic location. Respondents’ affiliation to specific generational cohorts could be established based on their responses to the question surrounding their age and were therefore classified as per the discussion presented in the literature review.

**Table 3.1** provides an overview of the operationalisation of the key concepts, the accompanying scale items and the type of data analysis that was performed.

**TABLE 3.1: Operationalisation Table**

| Construct | Dimensions | Measurement Scales | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective 1:** To explore and describe consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices | | | |
| **Voluntary simplistic [sustainable] clothing consumption practices** | ***Section E: Voluntary simplistic (sustainable) clothing practices***<br>*Items derived from the scale developed by Reis (2019), Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) as well as Taljaard (2020)*<br>How often do you engage in the following sustainable clothing consumption practices [1=" Never" to 5=" Always"] | | |
| | **Ethical and locally produced clothing consumption** | • I support clothing labels that are produced by local South African communities.<br>• I shop at stores that promote "Proudly South African" clothing.<br>• I support clothing manufacturers who create employment and fair working conditions.<br>• I prefer clothes made in South Africa to imported brands.<br>• I prefer buying clothes made in South Africa to clothes manufactured overseas. | **Descriptive analysis**:<br>• Frequencies<br>• Percentages<br>• Means<br><br>**Inferential analysis:**<br>• Exploratory Factor Analysis |
| | **Eco-friendly clothing consumption** | • I try to be pro-environmental by rather shopping at places that are known to be eco-friendly.<br>• I buy clothes that are good for the environment (e.g. recycled polyester or bamboo).<br>• Whenever it is possible, I buy clothes with eco-friendly features (e.g. organic cotton).<br>• I usually purchase a garment after checking information related to eco-friendly including organic cotton, eco-friendly dyeing.<br>• I will buy clothing that is safe for the environment. | |
| | **Repurposed clothing consumption - clothing longevity** | • I dispose of clothing in an eco-friendly way (e.g. donating it to charities).<br>• If we do not wear certain clothes anymore, we pass them on to family or friends to be reused.<br>• I recycle old clothing into something new (e.g. using old T-shirts as cleaning rags or making patchwork cushions from old jeans).<br>• I repair my damaged clothes rather than throwing them away to reduce my overall waste.<br>• I have clothing altered if it no longer fits me so that I can wear it again. | |
| | **Unique handcrafted clothing consumption** | • I would much rather wear clothes that are handcrafted than mass-produced clothes.<br>• Whenever possible, I buy clothes with handcrafted features.<br>• Craftmanship is very important in the clothes I purchase.<br>• I prefer clothes made with traditional techniques.<br>• I usually try to be different by purchasing uniquely handcrafted clothing. | |
| | **Need-based (reduced) clothing consumption** | • I make a conscious effort to only buy clothes that I really need.<br>• When going to a special occasion, I rather wear something I already have than buying a new outfit.<br>• I think that a purchase of a new garment has to be done to a minimum.<br>• I purchase only to fulfil my basic needs and wants.<br>• I make clothing purchases only when needed. | |
| **Objective 2:** To determine the differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory | | | |
| **Generational Cohorts** | ***Section H: Demographics***<br>To which age category do you belong? | | **Descriptive analysis**:<br>• Frequencies<br>• Percentages<br>• Means<br><br>**Inferential analysis:**<br>• ANOVAS |
| | **Baby Boomers** | > 56 years (Born between the years of 1946 and 1964) | |
| | **Generation X** | 41 - 56 years (Born between 1965 and 1980) | |
| | **Generation Y/ Millennials** | 25 - 40 years old (Born between 1981 and 1997) | |
| | **Generation Z** | 18 - 24 years (Born between 1998 and 2012) | |

## 3.5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The objectives of this study were addressed using an existing data set that was gathered in 2021 by the University of Pretoria's final-year Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students. By using an online questionnaire, the probability of errors was reduced since data was captured electronically and involved no manual intervention thus also contributing to cost savings (Sincero, 2008). The link to the questionnaire was shared via SMS, WhatsApp, and e-mails and posted on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which made it very accessible, easy to complete, user-friendly and allowed all respondents to remain anonymous. In general, respondents tend to feel more comfortable providing honest and open feedback when confidentiality is guaranteed (Grobler, 2020). The quantitative responses derived from the online questionnaires were captured and coded via the Qualtrics software. Thereafter the data was cleaned, eliminating all incomplete responses and exported to SPSS statistical software for further data analysis.

Data analysis can be defined as a process of accumulating and summarising quantities of collected data to draw conclusions from it (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). For this study, the initial analysis involved descriptive statistics, which entails computing frequencies, percentages and means. Following the descriptive analysis, inferential statistical analysis was performed including an Exploratory Factor Analysis (Centobelli et al., 2022) and a one-way analysis of variances (Inanova et al., 2019). As it relates to the first objective of the study the EFA was performed by means of SPSS statistical software to uncover undetected or underlying factors that are present in the raw data (Mazzocchi, 2008), specifically focusing on the data gathered surrounding voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. ANOVA is described as an alternative approach to mean comparison for multiple groups (Mazzocchi, 2008), which is particularly appropriate for discovering potential differences among the generational cohorts in their engagement of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. The ANOVA was performed to address the second objective of this study, which focused on determining the differences in the various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory.

## 3.6 QUALITY OF DATA

Efforts were devoted to ensuring the quality of the data and the overall results derived from the data collection and analysis. These efforts were focused on both validity and reliability.

### 3.6.1 VALIDITY

The term validity refers to the extent to which research instruments measure what they are supposed to measure (Maree, 2016). It relates to how logical, meaningful, sensible, truthful and ultimately useful the research is (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). It is thus crucial that researchers endeavour to pursue validity in a study to ensure that they produce meaningful and valid results. During this study, validity was ensured by, among others, using scales that have been validated in prior empirical research (Reis, 2019) and well-established research methods to measure key concepts in question. In addition, an extensive literature review was conducted to ensure that the main concepts and topics of interest were well understood and correctly translated into the measuring instrument. Two types of validity were addressed in particular namely content and construct validity.

- *Content validity* refers to the extent to which the instrument captures the complete content of the particular construct that is being measured (Maree, 2016). To establish content validity, the formulation of a new questionnaire must be rigorously approached. Questions items must be checked and evaluated to ensure that there is a logical flow between concepts and that the wording is suitable. This can be done through pre-testing the questionnaire. The questionnaire for this study was pre-tested by final year Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students before data collection commenced to ensure absolute clarity of question items especially those relating to voluntary simplistic dimensions. Ambiguous descriptions or terminology were eliminated and effort was devoted toward making the survey easy to understand and respond to.

  *Construct validity* of data refers to the credibility of the constructs measured (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Maree (2016) mentions that this type of validity is needed for standardization and has to do with how accurately the constructs covered by the instruments are measured by different classifications of related items. More simply put, construct validity is achieved by ensuring that variables measuring specific constructs relate directly and strongly to those constructs (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Construct validity was pursued in this study by conducting an in-depth literature review to identify, among others, connotations among concepts and to ensure these concepts are well understood in terms of underlying dimensions and potential indicators. For example, as explained in the literature review, sustainable clothing consumption may be based on the ideology of voluntary simplicity. Therefore, the referral to “sustainable clothing consumption” was used in addition to explanations within the questionnaire, to ensure that respondents understood what practices were referred to.

### 3.6.2 RELIABILITY

Reliability relates to the extent to which the same instrument of measure can be conducted at different times or administered to different respondents from the same population, and still have the findings remain consistent (Maree, 2016). The reliability of research is a direct indicator of the level of quality of the data collected (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Efforts were directed toward ensuring the reliability of the study's measuring instrument including pre-testing of the questionnaires to make sure question items were appropriate, clear and easy to complete. In addition, the scale items that were included in the questionnaire were derived and adapted from existing credible research which increases the reliability of the research instrument. The internal consistency of responses was furthermore assessed using statistical measures such as Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Maree, 2016; Öberseder *et al.*, 2014; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019), which is reported together with the other results of this study. The Cronbach alphas in this study achieved values above the acceptable thresholds of 0.7. More specifically, the voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices including ethical and sustainable clothing consumption ($\alpha = 0.888$), handcrafted clothing consumption ($\alpha = 0.832$), reduced consumption ($\alpha = 0.841$) and locally produced clothing ($\alpha = 0.841$) all achieved high Cronbach alpha values and thus indicate a high level of internal consistency in responses to the scales used in this study.

## 3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics can be seen as a manner to distinguish between what is right and wrong throughout the process of data collection from participants (Fouché *et al.*, 2011; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Ethics in research is defined as the protection of individuals by following a set of moral principles that govern their conduct. Quinlan *et al.*, (2019) highlight the importance of ethical standards and principles that must be adopted by the researcher to the extent in which their decision-making would be guided through ethics and that the sensitive and humane treatment of participants becomes part of their lifestyle. For this study, ethical issues were taken into consideration to ensure fair and ethical treatment of the study participants, such as respondents' identities and personal information being kept confidential to ensure anonymity. Before respondents were allowed to proceed with answering the questionnaire, they had to provide consent after the purpose of the study was explained to them in which they then also voluntarily agreed to participate in the survey. Respondents were made aware of the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any point and could decline participation without implications.

Going forward, all findings of this study will be presented objectively, and the report will be conducted in an unbiased and accurate manner. Plagiarism and referencing guidelines were

adhered to throughout the completion of this dissertation and recognition was given to the intellectual property of others. A Turnitin similarity report is included in **Addendum C** for further reference. Ethical clearance (reference number: NAS 288/2021) was obtained through the University of Pretoria's Natural and Agricultural Sciences Research Ethics Committee for the larger research study (please see the letter of confirmation included in **Addendum B**).

## 3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used for this study and hence highlighted the research design, sample and sampling method, data collection and analysis. An operationalization table, which summarized the study's objectives, dimensions, indicators, the relevant scale items and the method of analysis, was also included in this chapter. Lastly, validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations were discussed. The elements described in this chapter thus established the basis from which the empirical findings for this study were generated. The chapter to follow will provide a more detailed account of the study's findings.

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four provides an overview of the results and the interpretation thereof in line with the problem statement and objectives of the study. Based on the conceptual framework and literature review presented in Chapter Two, the main aim of this study is to explore the potential differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices, based on data that was gathered during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objectives were more specifically formulated surrounding the exploration of (1) consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices that may relate to voluntary simplistic dimensions such as material simplicity, ecological awareness, self-determination and human scale and (2) to determine the differences in the various generation cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory. This study's generational cohorts of interest include Baby boomers, Generation X, Y and Z. The demographic profile of the sample is described in terms of gender, age, population group, income, level of education and geographical location. The results are interpreted with consideration of the overall research problem and with referral to existing literature.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Kumar (2014) argued that generational cohorts in addition to gender and other demographic factors such as population groups, income, and level of education could influence consumers' perceptions of voluntary simplistic consumption practices. For these reasons, it was deemed important that the following section provides a thorough descriptive overview of the demographic characteristics (including gender, age, population group, income, level of education and geographical location) of the sample, so that it may serve as an appropriate background for the results presented in the rest of the chapter. **Table 4.1** provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the sample (n=788)**

| Variables | Frequency (n) | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender (n=788)** | | |
| Male | 317 | 40.2 |
| Female | 465 | 59.0 |
| Other | 6 | 00.8 |
| **Age (n=788)** | | |
| Baby Boomers (57-older) | 84 | 10.7 |
| Generation X (41-56 years) | 170 | 21.6 |
| Generation Y (25-40 years) | 244 | 31.0 |
| Generation Z (18-24 years) | 280 | 35.5 |
| **Population group (n=788)** | | |
| White | 368 | 46.7 |
| Black | 280 | 35.5 |
| Other | 140 | 17.8 |
| **Level of education (n=788)** | | |
| Lower than grade 12 | 17 | 2.2 |
| Grade 12 | 203 | 25.8 |
| Tertiary degree/diploma | 364 | 46.2 |
| Postgraduate | 204 | 25.9 |
| **Area of residence (n=788)** | | |
| Gauteng | 567 | 72.0 |
| Other provinces | 221 | 28.0 |
| **Level of income (n=788)** | | |
| Less than R5 000 | 213 | 27.0 |
| Between R 5 001 and R15 000 | 183 | 23.2 |
| Between R 15 001 and R 25 000 | 137 | 17.4 |
| Between R 25 001 and R 35 000 | 90 | 11.4 |
| Between R 35 001 and R 45 000 | 59 | 7.5 |
| More than R 45 000 | 106 | 13.5 |

### 4.2.1 Gender

As can be gathered from **Table 4.1**, the sample had a slightly larger representation of females (59%) compared to males (40%). A few respondents (n=6) classified themselves as other in terms of gender affiliation. Previous studies that have explored gender differences in sustainable consumption have highlighted the impact gender-associated social stigmas and norms have on sustainable consumption (Zhao *et al.*, 2021). Some have suggested that females tend to be more environmentally concerned than males (Brough *et al.*, 2016). However, men tend to have more knowledge about environmental issues, although they are less willing to change their behaviour (Brits, 2015). Both males and females were thus included in this research sample to provide a more balanced and accurate perspective of the genders.

### 4.2.2 Age and generational cohorts

Out of the total sample (n=788), 35.5% (n=280) belonged to Generation Z; 31% (n=244) belonged to Generation Y; 21.6% (n=170) belonged to Generation X and 10.7% (n=84) were

affiliated to the Baby Boomer generational cohort. This broad age spectrum allows for some diversity to explore the differences in generation cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. **Figure 4.1** depicts the sample composition in terms of the various generation cohorts.

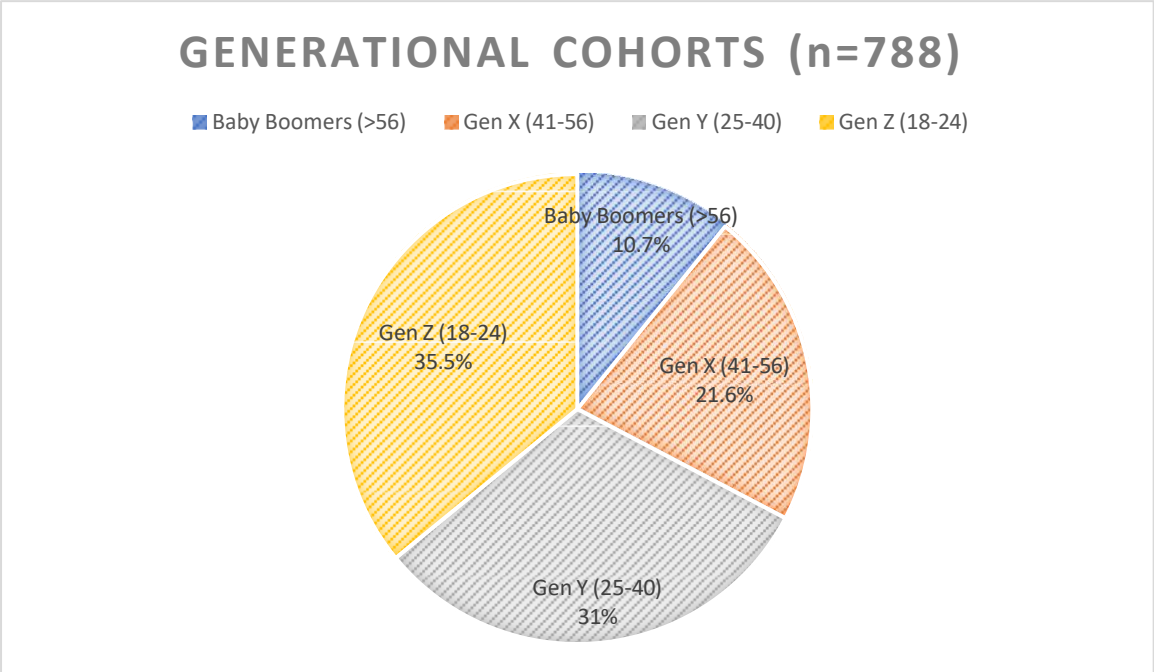


**FIGURE 4.1: Generational cohorts**

The most prominent generational cohort in this sample was Generation Z (35.5%), which may be attributed to convenience sampling. Respondents were recruited by final year Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students from the University of Pretoria, who may have approached their fellow students and friends to participate in the study. In South Africa, Generation Y and Z make up almost 65.7% of the entire population (Stats SA, 2021). Thus, even though the results of the study cannot be generalized to the larger population due to convenience sampling, it was deemed appropriate for the exploratory purposes of the study.

### 4.2.3 Population groups

Respondents were asked to select the most appropriate population group (according to the South African Equity Act) to which they belong. After completion of data collection, the categories labelled "Coloured", "Indian/Asian" and "I prefer not to say" weregrouped together for ease of analysis and interpretation as follows: "White", "Black" and "Other".

As can be gathered from **Table 4.1** the sample includes a larger percentage of individuals who form part of the White (46.7%) and Black (35.5%) population groups. According to South African statistics, roughly 81% of the population is black (Stats SA, 2022). Thus, the data does not accurately depict the larger population of South Africa and should not be generalized. This may once again be attributed to the convenience sampling techniques that were used. South

Africa is known for its diverse culture, and therefore it is critical to reiterate that the results of this study cannot be generalized to the larger South African population and should be viewed purely from an exploratory perspective.

### 4.2.4 Level of income

Respondents were asked to respond to a close-ended question relating to their approximate total monthly household income after deductions in section H of the questionnaire. The responses to monthly household incomes were categorized into six main groups namely; “Less than R 5000”, “Between R5 001 and R15 000”, “Between R15 001 and R25 000”, “Between R25 001 and R35 000”, “Between R35 001 and R45 000” and “More than R45 000”. As can be gathered from the overview presented in **Table 4.1**, most respondents had an approximate income of less than R5 000 (27%). This could be attributed to the fact that most respondents are part of the youngest generational cohort and thus less likely to generate high monthly incomes in general. Additionally, it was found that a fifth of South African youth fall below the lower-bound poverty line (Stats SA, 2019). Most of the general South African population older than 25 years earn more than an estimated median of R18 000 a month (PaylabSA, 2022). Thus, noteworthy is the number of respondents who earn between R15 001 and R25 000 (17.4%) as well as between R25 001 and R35 000 (11.4%), which could be attributed to some of the older respondents who completed the questionnaire, who tend to be more established financially.

An individual’s income determines to a large extent the type and quality of products he or she buys. Empirical findings seem to suggest that poorer consumers are more likely to reuse products, whereas the social consciousness of the higher-income consumer groups compels them to recycle for environmental sustainability (Kozar & Hiller, 2013). In the local context, additional complexities need to be considered. As an example, South Africa is well known for its extreme levels of income inequality, which historically stems from a discriminatory apartheid system (Beaubien, 2018). Income inequality makes it very problematic for South Africa to reduce its carbon footprint because the effort is concentrated towards poverty improvement and, by implication, increases consumption, which also increases the country’s carbon footprint. Hence, there is a need to stimulate a greater propensity to engage in responsible consumption which may involve voluntary simplistic practices.

### 4.2.5 Level of education

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education in a close-ended question. Four categories were identified namely; “Lower than Grade 12”, “Grade 12”, “Tertiary diploma/degree” and “Postgraduate” as seen in **Figure 4.2** below.

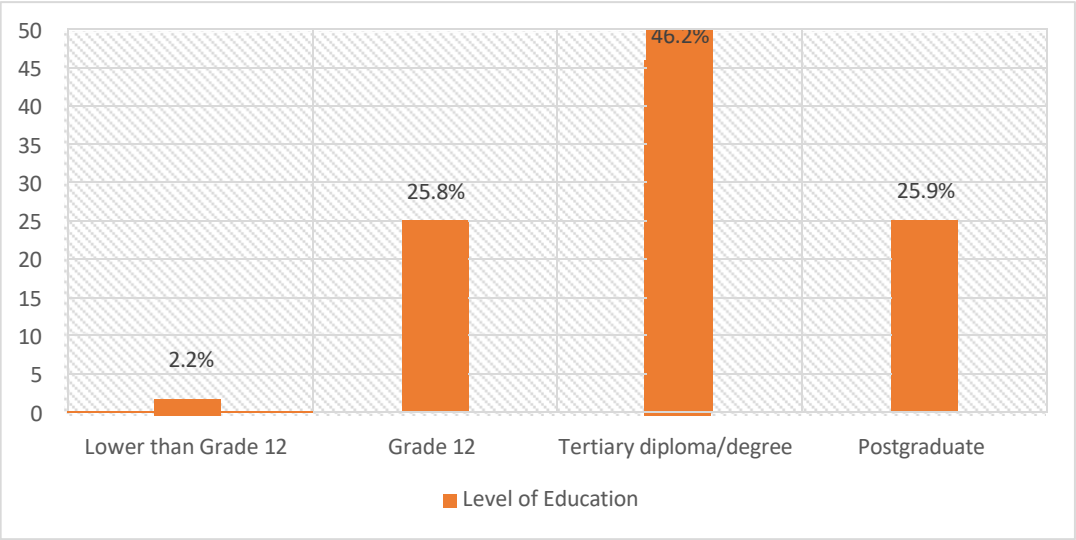


**FIGURE 4.2: Level of education**

Wang *et al.* (2022) argued three distinct reasons why education is an essential catalyst for pro-environmental behaviour. Firstly, to fully comprehend the complex environmental concepts and issues of today, knowledge and certain skills are required which are accumulated through education. Relatedly, it is claimed that people with higher levels of formal education have access to much more sources and varieties of information (Wang *et al.*, 2022). More exposure to information further increases consumers' environmental knowledge and awareness (Wen *et al.*, 2011). Lastly, based on the hierarchy of needs, higher-educated individuals tend to have already met their basic needs, allowing them to focus on higher-order needs and facilitating the adoption of pro-environmental lifestyles (Liere & Dunlap, 1980; Maslow, 1970). In other words, education could increase the marginal utility of pro-environmental behaviours compared to the marginal utility of the money (income) (Wang *et al.*, 2022).

According to the results, most of the respondents have a tertiary diploma/degree (46.2%), which could once again be due to the majority of respondents being recruited in the surrounding areas of the University of Pretoria including friends and family of graduates. According to recent statistical reports, South Africa has marked a 24% increase in tertiary enrolment in 2019 (The World Bank, 2022). Research furthermore suggests that the number of students enrolled and graduated has amplified, thus the local population seem to engage more in post-Grade 12 education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019) and with that, greater awareness and understanding of voluntary simplistic consumption practices may develop.

### 4.2.6 Geographic location

As mentioned in Chapter Three, respondents had to reside in the geographical boundaries of South Africa for them to participate in the study. The online questionnaire made it possible to reach respondents from various provinces throughout South Africa. For the purpose of analysis, certain geographic locations were grouped. As can be gathered from **Table 4.1**, the data was skewed in having a large percentage of individuals residing in the Gauteng area (72%). The other provinces were therefore not well represented in this sample and the findings of this study can thus not be used for generalisation. The reason could be attributed to the particular sampling techniques that were used, including convenience- and snowball sampling, which led to most of the respondents being recruited in the surrounding area of the University of Pretoria.

Nonetheless, Gauteng is considered to be the economic hub (Gauteng City- Region Observatory, 2018), generating over a third of South Africa's GDP. As a result, many global firms have established their regional headquarters in this province. Moreover, it's well connected to the rest of South Africa through a comprehensive network of national roads and additionally bearing in mind Gauteng has many excellent public and private academic and research institutions. Furthermore, Gauteng is a youthful province, with the majority of its population already of working age (Gauteng City- Region Observatory, 2018). Moreover, one could argue it is a good area to recruit respondents from given their exposure to opportunities, products and ideas surrounding sustainability and voluntary simplistic practices.

To summarise, the sample for this study consists mainly of Generation Z (35.5%), with 47% (n=368) of them belonging to the white population. Most respondents earn a relative monthly household income of less than R5 000 (27%), followed by those who earn between R5 001 and R15 000 (23%). Furthermore, most of the respondents have a tertiary degree/diploma (46%), and the majority reside in Gauteng (72%).

## 4.3 CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT IN VOLUNTARY SIMPLISTIC CLOTHING CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Previous chapters highlight key concepts relating to voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices with specific reference to the different voluntary simplistic dimensions. To address the first objective of this study, that is focused on these voluntary simplistic clothing consumption dimensions, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was applied to the data derived from Section E of the questionnaire and is reported in the following section.

### 4.3.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

An EFA can be defined as a technique whereby raw collected data is analysed by utilising statistical software to reveal underlying factors present in the dataset (Mazzocchi, 2008). Using SPSS software, the extraction method chosen to perform the EFA was Principal Axis Factoring. Furthermore, after initial extraction, Varimax Rotation with Kaizer Normalization was applied to the factors to noticeably define different factor groups (Duane & Leandre, 2019). The decision to retain a certain number of factors involves a review of the point of inflexion on the screen plot, as well as a consideration of Kaiser's criterion (i.e. eigenvalues ≤ 1 are retained) (Mazzocchi, 2008), which led to a five-factor solution being deemed acceptable. Factor loadings refer to the relationship of each variable to its underlying factor. For each of the five factors identified, items with factor loadings above a threshold of 0.40 were retained. The resulting EFA provided loadings that were suitably isolated with no cross-loadings found on any factors and thus no elimination of items was necessary. Cumulatively, the five-factor solution explained 52, 2% of the total variance, which exceeds the minimum 50% threshold. The five factors derived from the EFA analysis were subsequently labelled as follows:

Factor 1: Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption (ESCC)
Factor 2: Handcrafted Clothing Consumption (HCC)
Factor 3: Reduced consumption (RDC)
Factor 4: Locally Produced Clothing (LPC)
Factor 5: Repurposed Clothing (RC)

These aforementioned factors more or less correspond to those identified by Reis (2019), Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) in their respective analysis of the scale items. The means of the factors, as identified in this study, are graphically depicted **i**n **Figure 4.3** below. The factor means indicate that most respondents sometimes engaged in ethical and sustainable clothing consumption (M=2.9) and uniquely handcrafted clothing consumption (M=3.0), yet seemed more engaged in reduced consumption (M=3.7), locally produced clothing (M=3.2) as well as repurposed clothing (M=3.6). According to the data, need-based

clothing consumption (M=3.7) achieved the highest mean, which may indicate respondents' strong perspectives on acquiring clothing items based on necessity, rather than want.

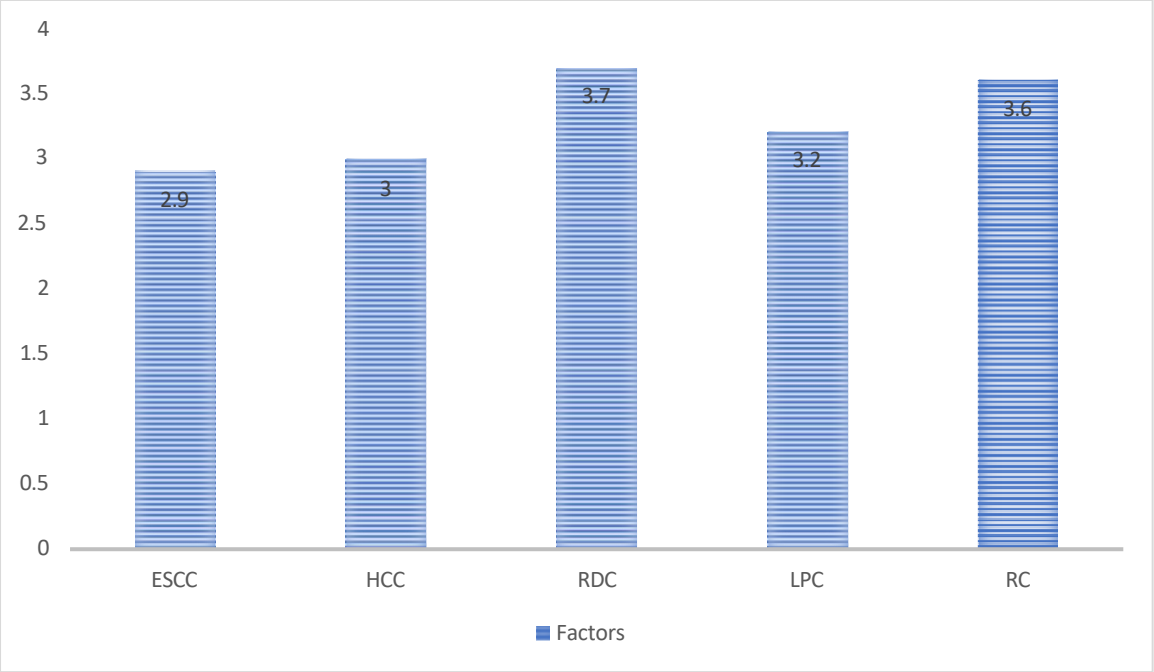


**FIGURE 4.3: Factor means**

**Table 4.2** provides an overview of the EFA results, followed by a more detailed discussion of each of the factors identified through the analysis.

**TABLE 4.2: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis**

| Scale item | | Factors | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption (ESCC) | Handcrafted clothing (HCC) | Reduced consumption (RDC) | Local Produced Clothing (LPC) | Repurposed Clothing (RC) |
| E3 | Whenever it is possible, I buy clothes with eco-friendly features (e.g. organic cotton). | **.675** | .317 | .093 | .203 | .180 |
| E4 | When purchasing garments, I pay attention to eco-friendly features such as organic cotton, and/or eco-friendly dyeing. | **.664** | .366 | .067 | .192 | .157 |
| E5 | I will buy clothing that is good for the environment. | **.651** | .243 | .066 | .257 | .219 |
| E2 | I buy clothes that are good for the environment (e.g. recycled polyester or bamboo). | **.647** | .292 | .074 | .236 | .206 |
| E1 | I try to be pro-environmental by rather shopping at places that are known to be eco-friendly. | **.636** | .277 | .039 | .293 | .196 |
| E8 | I support clothing manufacturers who create employment and fair working conditions. | **.472** | .195 | .080 | .293 | .238 |
| E19 | I prefer clothes made by handcrafted techniques. | .232 | **.728** | .059 | .260 | .167 |
| E16 | I would much rather wear clothes that are handcrafted than clothes that are mass-produced. | .221 | **.634** | .046 | .241 | .090 |
| E17 | Whenever possible, I buy clothes with handcrafted features. | .325 | **.634** | .008 | .279 | .198 |
| E20 | I like to be different in my choice of uniquely handcrafted clothing items. | .260 | **.624** | -.081 | .172 | .113 |
| E18 | Craftsmanship is important in the clothes I purchase. | .237 | **.469** | .067 | .059 | .123 |
| E25 | I make clothing purchases only when needed. | .033 | .026 | **.820** | .053 | .134 |
| E21 | I make a conscious effort to only buy clothes that I really need. | .110 | .005 | **.776** | .068 | .129 |
| E23 | I limit my purchasing of new garments. | .079 | .053 | **.722** | .045 | .162 |
| E24 | I purchase only to fulfil my basic needs and wants. | .035 | .001 | **.616** | .100 | .117 |
| E22 | When going to a special occasion, I rather wear something I already have than buying a new outfit. | .002 | .033 | **.596** | .025 | .066 |
| E9 | I prefer clothes made in South Africa to imported brands. | .242 | .235 | .151 | **.728** | .110 |
| E10 | I prefer buying clothes made in South Africa to clothes manufactured overseas. | .244 | .246 | .132 | **.725** | .132 |
| E6 | I support clothing labels that are produced by local South African communities. | .336 | .244 | .056 | **.654** | .204 |
| E7 | I shop at stores that promote "Proudly South African" clothing. | .341 | .269 | .056 | **.643** | .174 |
| E14 | I repair my damaged clothes rather than throwing them away to reduce my waste. | .071 | .178 | .241 | .175 | **.629** |
| E12 | If I do not wear certain clothes anymore, I pass them on to family or friends to be reused. | .142 | .025 | .091 | .042 | **.509** |
| E13 | I recycle old clothing into something new (e.g. using old T-shirts as cleaning rags). | .125 | .160 | .112 | .092 | **.497** |
| E11 | I dispose of clothing in an eco-friendly way (e.g. donating it to charities). | .175 | .051 | .096 | .064 | **.420** |
| E15 | I have clothing altered if it no longer fits me so that I can wear it again. | .127 | .292 | .158 | .161 | **.409** |
| | *N* | 788 | 788 | 788 | 788 | 788 |
| | *Mean* | 2,9 | 3,0 | 3,7 | 3,2 | 3,6 |
| | *% of Variance explained* | 12.6 | 11.3 | 10.9 | 10.3 | 7.1 |
| | *Cumulative % of Variance explained* | 12.6 | 23.9 | 34.8 | 45.1 | 52.2 |
| | *Cronbach alpha* | .888 | .832 | .841 | .841 | .684 |

**Factor 1: Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption (ESCC)**

Six items that focused on consumers' engagement in ethical and sustainable clothing consumption practices were grouped under this particular factor and were labelled accordingly as "Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption". The Cronbach α value of 0.888 for this factor indicated a high level of internal consistency in responses to these items. According to (Fouché *et al.*, 2011), an acceptable Cronbach's α value ranges between 0.7 and 0.95. The mean value (M=2.9) for this factor reveals consumers' moderate support and acquisition of clothing with eco-friendly features, shopping at stores that promote eco-friendly products, and supporting manufacturers who create employment and fair working conditions. This might tie in with the findings of a study conducted by Panda *et al.* (2020) which found that the growing sustainability awareness amongst consumers of the environmental and social influence of their consumption behaviour may lead some to reconsider their own choices. Such choices involve greater sensitivity through a selection of more ethical and sustainable alternatives.

In the local context, increasingly more retailers, such as Cape Union Mart have made significant strides in reducing their carbon footprints and supplying a range of recyclable products as well as including recycled packaging and swing tags (Pargo, 2022). Previous studies have indicated that implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility practices by companies, like those implemented by Cape Union Mart has a positive impact on consumers' evaluation of said practices, which in turn results in a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions and behaviour (Singh & Malla, 2017). Implementations of such efforts by companies would seem beneficial and appeal to the perspectives of the local consumer population. Additionally, consumers are gradually becoming more aware of the social crisis in the industry with an excess of low-quality and cheap clothing being produced in unfair and unsafe working conditions that exploit many vulnerable groups of people (Brooks, 2015). This could be a reason why local consumers support retailers and manufacturers who encourage fair working conditions and provide clothing with eco-friendly features. An annual survey conducted by Deloitte on how consumers are embracing sustainability confirmed the increased consumer awareness and found that consumers are paying more attention to ethical working practices and human rights issues when making purchasing decisions (Deloitte, 2023). These clothing consumption practices relate to the underlying voluntary simplistic dimensions of human scale and ecological awareness.

**Factor 2: Handcrafted Clothing Consumption (HCC)**

Factor two specifically relates to the underlying voluntary simplistic dimension of human scale, which focuses on the support of smaller-scale organisations and in particular artisanal and local craftmanship (Reis, 2019). The items grouped under this factor describe an approach whereby consumers attain handmade clothing, which may be perceived as unique or different. Such features may distinguish the product from those that are mass-produced and therefore may be valued in the local marketplace. This factor's items combined had a Cronbach's α of 0.832, which is deemed acceptable having exceeded the minimum reliability coefficient threshold of 0.70. The factor mean was calculated as 3.0, which indicates that respondents may sometimes support and show a preference for products that have distinct handcrafted features. Such features strongly relate to items manufactured according to slow fashion values, including quality-driven production, such as when items are handcrafted (Clark, 2008). Similarly, a local study by Reis (2019), mentions that HCC coincides with some of the underlying dimensions of the first factor (ESCC) because as Clark (2008) explains, handmade items will undeniably increase labour demands, thus bringing rise to employment opportunities and potentially delivering products that comply with better ethical practices. Furthermore, HCC may be particularly beneficial for a growing middle-class consumer segment who might prefer and seek clothing items that are unique and different from those that are mass-produced (PWC, 2012).

**Factor 3: Reduced consumption (RDC)**

The third factor labelled "Reduced consumption" (RDC) derives from the voluntary simplicity dimension of material simplicity which is characterized by a choice to maintain a simple and minimalistic lifestyle in which buying goods that seem unnecessary, is limited (Reis, 2019). The items grouped under this factor had a Cronbach's α of 0.841, which once again is deemed acceptable as it surpasses the minimum threshold. The mean for this factor had the highest value of 3.7 compared to the other factors. This indicates a strong association concerning consumers' willingness to limit their purchase of new items and only purchase items that are of necessity. The argument that is brought forward is that lockdown and social distancing measures that prevailed during the Covid-19 pandemic, coerced consumers to shop differently and to prioritize what is essential (J.P.Morgan-Research, 2020). As an example, the French Minister of Economy declared that during the time of the pandemic, 3.8 billion euros were saved in March 2020 by not investing in excessive consumption (Cambefort, 2020). Likewise, statistics all around the world illustrate the same downsizing trend. According to Macrotrends (2022), South Africa's consumer spending has decreased in 2020 by 15.64%. Current literature suggests that individuals who choose not to engage in repetitive and unnecessary

consumption behaviours tend to make purchasing decisions to maximise their enjoyment at the lowest cost to others and/or the environment (Pravet & Holmlund, 2018).

**Factor 4: Locally Produced Clothing (LPC)**

All items relating to this factor, which were labelled “Locally Produced Clothing” (LPC), are indicative of the human scale dimension of voluntary simplicity since they focus on clothing that has been acquired in support of local and ethical brands. The Cronbach’s α for this factor was 0.841, which means that the respondents had consistent responses to the LPC items. The factor’s mean of 3.2 reflects respondents’ inclination to support local and ethical brands. Empirical findings reported by Muposhi, Dhurup and Shamhuyenhanzva (2018) similarly identified that South African consumers prefer to purchase local products. This could be a result of the “Proudly South African” campaign that supports local products. Overall, South African consumers tend to display high levels of ethnocentrism for the protection of local economic growth against foreign products to encourage local employment, hence showing concerns for the country’s high level of unemployment (Muposhi *et al.*, 2018). This voluntary simplistic dimension is particularly important in the local context. Supporting small-scale and local companies could encourage ethically sound working conditions and empower the South African community that struggles with high levels of unemployment and poverty. Supporting Proudly South African products thus creates more prospects for new local designers and self-employment opportunities that better the country’s economic growth. In addition, supporting local products rather than buying imported goods, directly and indirectly, benefits the environment, because they produce less waste by eliminating unnecessary transportation and delivery, resulting in fewer carbon emissions that contribute to air pollution. Additionally, reduced transportation results in less packaging waste (Robinson, 2010)

**Factor 5: Repurposed Clothing (RC)**

Factor five, labelled “Repurposed Clothing” (RC) underscores voluntary simplistic dimensions such as ecological awareness and self-determination (Leonard-Barton, 1981; Reis, 2019). The items that are grouped under this factor relate to an approach whereby consumers rather recycle old clothes into something new, repurpose old garments or donate them. In essence, these items emphasize the concept of increasing the lifespan of clothing items. This factor’s items had a Cronbach’s α of 0.684, which is slightly below the acceptable reliability value of 0.7. The lower Cronbach’s α may imply that the concept being tested was somewhat vague and/or that the respondents were not quite sure how to respond to the particular scale item (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Thus, further scale development can be recommended for future research whereby more scale items can be added and/or items can be refined to more

effectively measure repurposed clothing consumption practices. Nonetheless, the mean for this factor had the second-highest value (M=3.6) of all the factors. This also indicates consumers' more frequent engagement in sustainable practices that upcycle, repair, or recycle clothing items rather than throwing them away. Bhatt *et al.* (2019) suggest that upcycling clothing could be a solution that allows brands and consumers to recreate or repurpose old clothing to control the masses of used clothing that ends up in the waste stream. This will not only have positive consequences for the environment but may also serve as a vehicle of social upliftment for individuals who engage in such practices to generate income.

In summarising, the EFA produced a five-factor solution, with each factor labelled according to the type of clothing consumption practices reflected in the scale items that converged under the particular factor. Respondents were moderately engaged in ethical and sustainable clothing consumption practices (Factor 1) and showed some preference for products that have distinct handcrafted features (Factor 2). They seemed more inclined to reduce their consumption (Factor 3), support locally produced clothing (Factor 4) and repurpose unwanted clothing (Factor 5). Practices revolving around reduced clothing consumption (RDC) and the repurposing of clothing (RC) attained the highest means of all the factors indicating respondents' strong association and willingness to limit their clothing purchases and to further upcycle, repair, or recycle unwanted clothing items rather than throwing such garments away. The results of the EFA served as an appropriate basis for further one-way analysis of variances to establish potential differences in the various generational cohorts' engagement in the identified voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices.

## 4.4 GENERATIONAL COHORTS' ENGAGEMENT IN VOLUNTARY SIMPLISTIC CLOTHING CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

The second objective of this study focused on determining differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory (GCT). The generational cohorts investigated in the study included Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z. The sections to follow highlight the statistical procedures that were performed to accomplish the results for this particular objective.

### 4.4.1 One-way analysis of variance

The one-way analysis of variance or ANOVA usually is applied to conclude whether there are any statistically significant differences between means of independent groups of three or more (Mazzocchi, 2008). An ANOVA is therefore an appropriate statistical technique to facilitate the comparison of the generational cohort groups' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. For this study, an ANOVA was performed to seek significant differences across the generational cohorts including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z in terms of five factors, including consumers engagements in "Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption" (ESCC), "Handcrafted Clothing Consumption" (HCC), "Reduced Consumption" (RDC), supporting "Locally Produced Clothing" (LPC) and "Repurposed Clothing" (RC). The summarised results are presented in **Table 4.3**. To conduct an ANOVA, the homogeneity assumption must be upheld i.e. the population variances of the dependent variables must be equal for all groups (Levene, 1960; Olkin, 1960). Hence, Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances was first conducted on the data of which the results are reported in Table 4.3. As a rule of thumb, it is concluded that population variances are equal if "Sig" or $p = <0.05$. Where Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was found to be violated ($p = >0.05$), specifically on the second factor namely HCC, a Welch test was computed as an alternative. In addition, in cases where evidence of statistically significant differences in consumer engagement occurred, Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) post hoc test was performed to specify the differences more explicitly. The Post Hoc test results are presented in tables in terms of the respective factors and in terms of the generational cohorts.

**TABLE 4.3: Voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices per generational cohort**

| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | df | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption (ESCC) | Baby Boomers | 3.134 | .915 | | | |
| | Generation X | 3.033 | .904 | | | |
| | Generation Y | 2.786 | .904 | | | |
| | Generation Z | 2.854 | .802 | | | |
| | Total | 2.902 | .876 | 3.784 | 5.020 | .002 |
| Handcrafted Clothing Consumption (HCC) | Baby Boomers | 3.079 | .968 | | | |
| | Generation X | 3.025 | .823 | | | |
| | Generation Y | 2.902 | .909 | | | |
| | Generation Z | 2.950 | .779 | | | |
| | Total | 2.965 | .852 | 3.784 | 1.259 | .287 |
| Reduced Consumption (RDC) | Baby Boomers | 4.095 | .807 | | | |
| | Generation X | 3.814 | .840 | | | |
| | Generation Y | 3.690 | .879 | | | |
| | Generation Z | 3.652 | .847 | | | |
| | Total | 3.746 | .861 | 3.784 | 6.599 | ,000 |
| Locally Produced Clothing (LPC) | Baby Boomers | 3.435 | .872 | | | |
| | Generation X | 3.222 | .898 | | | |
| | Generation Y | 3.174 | .891 | | | |
| | Generation Z | 3.092 | .844 | | | |
| | Total | 3.182 | .878 | 3.784 | 3.487 | .015 |
| Repurposed Clothing (RC) | Baby Boomers | 3.838 | .718 | | | |
| | Generation X | 3.618 | .761 | | | |
| | Generation Y | 3.481 | .806 | | | |
| | Generation Z | 3.525 | .794 | | | |
| | Total | 3.565 | .789 | 3.784 | 4.848 | .002 |

### Factor 1: Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Consumption (ESCC)

An ANOVA was used to seek significant differences in generational cohorts' engagement in ESCC practices. As reported in **Table 4.3** the mean value of ESCC (M=2.9 [Min=1; Max=5]) for all four groups indicates that respondents would sometimes (moderately) engage in sustainable practices surrounding the support and acquisition of clothing with eco-friendly features, shop at stores that promote eco-friendly products, and support manufacturers who create employment and fair working conditions. Levene's test for equality of variances was found to comply with the homogeneity assumption for the present analysis, F(3.787) = 1.483, p = 0.218. Following this result, the ANOVA suggested significant statistical differences between the various generational cohorts' engagement in ESCC practices (F (3.787) = 5.020, p = 0.002), which prompted the Tukey post hoc test to be done to more explicitly describe these differences.

**TABLE 4.4: Tukey Post Hoc test: Ethical and sustainable clothing consumption per generational cohort**

| Generation | Generational Cohorts | Mean | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | Gen Y | 2.79 | .06789 | .07549 | .805 |
| | Gen X | 3.03 | -.17859 | .08394 | .145 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.13 | -.28017* | .10767 | .046 |
| Gen Y | Gen Z | 2.85 | -.06789 | .07549 | .805 |
| | Gen X | 3.03 | -.24647* | .08682 | .024 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.13 | -.34805* | .10993 | .009 |
| Gen X | Gen Z | 2.85 | .17859 | .08394 | .145 |
| | Gen Y | 2.79 | .24647* | .08682 | .024 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.13 | -.10158 | .11590 | .817 |
| Baby Boomers | Gen Z | 2.85 | .28017* | .10767 | .046 |
| | Gen Y | 2.79 | .34805* | .10993 | .009 |
| | Gen X | 3.03 | .10158 | .11590 | .817 |

The results of the Tukey HSD test (**Table 4.4**) revealed that Baby Boomers (M=3.23) were the most inclined to differ from the other cohorts i.e., Generation X (M=3.030, Y (M=2.79) and Z (M=2.85) in their ethical and sustainable clothing consumption practises. These results are somewhat contradictory to previous research conducted abroad (USA and other European countries), which reveal that younger generations are more inclined to consume green products (Ha-Brookshire & Norum, 2011; Nikolić *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, it is reported in current literature that younger consumers are prepared to pay extra for sustainable goods as they are more likely to respect companies' sustainability programs (Nichols & Holt, 2023). Overall, prior empirical evidence seems to indicate that, in comparison to younger generations, Baby Boomers have fewer positive attitudes regarding sustainability and give it less weight when making judgments about purchases. However, in this current study, the findings revealed that older generations (Baby boomers and Generation X) are more inclined to

support ethical and sustainable initiatives (e.g. purchase products from responsible companies) than the younger generations (Generation Y and Z) in the local South African context. These findings contrast those that seem to suggest that Baby Boomers are less likely to want to get involved in sustainability initiatives, are less likely to be swayed by sustainability claims when making decisions about purchases, and do not believe that businesses' sustainability efforts are worthwhile given the costs involved in achieving them (Nichols & Holt, 2023). In this regard, it is important to note that sustainable consumption behaviour may differ substantially from one context to another and that findings of studies that were conducted abroad are not necessarily applicable to the local South African context.

Other local findings by Kgomo and Modley (2022) may further substantiate the results derived from the current study. Kgomo and Modley (2022) compared older and younger generations' concerns about environmental change that is occurring on a global scale. Although the two generations' levels of environmental awareness of environmental issues were more or less the same, there was a substantial difference between the two generations' peer discussions on these issues, with the older generational cohorts having more pronounced views and more obvious concerns.

In this regard, it may be argued that Baby Boomers are known to be more interdependent than younger generations. Interdependent people are more likely to display higher ethical standards and increased concern for community issues, which in turn leads them to feel more guilt about ethical problems and thus propel them into action (Ham *et al*., 2022). Additionally, Ham *et al.* (2022) further elaborate and argue that younger generations tend to be more involved in pleasure-seeking for self-enjoyment, whereas older generations are more focused on benefits to the community and symbiosis with others. Therefore, within the local context, it might very well be that older generations are more responsible in addressing environmental problems and take more preventive actions than younger generations. The findings appear to contradict the view often portrayed in the media that younger consumers are the most environmentally aware. The reason that would possibly explain this discrepancy is that younger consumers may express their thoughts on issues that are important to them quite well, but this may mask a broader lack of understanding about the environmental impact of their behaviours (Klerk, Kharbanda & Jiang, 2022).

## Factor 2: Handcrafted Clothing Consumption (HCC)

The second factor had a mean value reported at 3.00, which indicates that respondents showed some preference for products that have distinct handcrafted features. However, Levene's test for equality of variances was found to be violated for the present analysis, $F(3.78) = 4.361$, $p = 0.005$. Due to this violation, a Welch test was computed as an alternative, which does not assume homogeneity of variance. The ANOVA test furthermore indicated that there was no statistically significant difference ($F(3.78) = 2.737$, $p = 0.287$) between the various generational cohorts. This implies that there are no distinct differences among the various generational cohorts' practices surrounding handcrafted clothing.

**TABLE 4.5: Tukey Post Hoc test: Handcrafted clothing consumption per generational cohorts**

| Generation | Generational Cohorts | Mean | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | Gen Y | 2.90 | .04802 | .07395 | .916 |
| | Gen X | 3.00 | -.07505 | .08222 | .798 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.08 | -.12892 | .10547 | .613 |
| Gen Y | Gen Z | 2.93 | -.04802 | .07395 | .916 |
| | Gen X | 3.00 | -.12307 | .08504 | .470 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.08 | -.17693 | .10768 | .355 |
| Gen X | Gen Z | 2.93 | .07505 | .08222 | .798 |
| | Gen Y | 2.90 | .12307 | .08504 | .470 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.08 | -.05387 | .11353 | .965 |
| Baby Boomers | Gen Z | 2.93 | .12892 | .10547 | .613 |
| | Gen Y | 2.90 | .17693 | .10768 | .355 |
| | Gen X | 3.00 | .05387 | .11353 | .965 |

The mean values reported are relatively similar and range from M=2.90 to M=3.08 [Min=1; Max=5]. This suggests that all respondents may engage to some extent in acquiring products that have distinct handcrafted features. Such features strongly relate to items manufactured according to slow fashion values, including quality-driven production, such as when items are handcrafted (Clark, 2008). Due to the intricacy of crafts, traditional handcrafted fashion products are typically priced higher than ordinary fashion products. The premium cost often becomes a barrier between consumption intention and actual consumption (Legere & Kang, 2020). Customisation is possible with handmade apparel, guaranteeing that each item is unique. This distinctive feature appeals to individuals who value individuality as well as adding to the allure of handcrafted clothing in general. Additionally, it can be assumed that those Generations reporting higher mean values such as Generation X (M=3.00) and Baby Boomers (M=3.08) are more willing to support exclusive products and perhaps even willing to pay more for them. These generations could be considered to earn a higher monthly income since they

have been part of the workforce for a longer time than Generation Y and Z who have not been in the workforce for an extensive period and/ or only recently entered the workforce.

Likewise, it is underlined that pricing is a key factor in sustainable design, especially when it comes to how young people evaluate apparel. Even though some consumers are prepared to pay more for sustainable items, consumer preferences are influenced by price perceptions (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020). Therefore, customers' perceptions of pricing may affect their views about buying handcrafted eco-friendly goods (Saepudin *et al.*, 2023). It is argued by Gomes, Lopes and Nogueira (2023), that because Generation Z consumers often have less disposable income, this generation could be very price-sensitive and therefore at times less inclined to adopt costly sustainable alternatives.

### Factor 3: Reduced Consumption (RDC)

This factor presented a high mean value (M=3.7), implying respondents' more frequent engagement in reduced consumption practices. The one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the various generational cohorts' engagement in reduced consumption behaviour F(3.78) = 6.599, p = <,001. As reported in **Table 4.6**, Baby Boomers (M=4.1) were the most inclined to differ from the other cohorts (i.e., Generation X [M=3.81], Y [M=3.69] and Z [M=3.65]) in their reduced consumption practises.

**TABLE 4.6: Tukey Post Hoc test: Reduced consumption per generational cohort**

| Generation | Generational Cohorts | Mean | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | Gen Y | 3.69 | -.03693 | .07398 | .959 |
| | Gen X | 3.81 | -.16170 | .08226 | .202 |
| | Baby Boomers | 4.10 | -.44282* | .10552 | ,000 |
| Gen Y | Gen Z | 3.65 | .03693 | .07398 | .959 |
| | Gen X | 3.81 | -.12477 | .08508 | .458 |
| | Baby Boomers | 4.10 | -.40589* | .10773 | .001 |
| Gen X | Gen Z | 3.65 | .16170 | .08226 | .202 |
| | Gen Y | 3.69 | .12477 | .08508 | .458 |
| | Baby Boomers | 4.10 | -.28112 | .11358 | .065 |
| Baby Boomers | Gen Z | 3.65 | .44282* | .10552 | ,000 |
| | Gen Y | 3.69 | .40589* | .10773 | .001 |
| | Gen X | 3.81 | .28112 | .11358 | .065 |

With regard to reduced consumption practices, it should be emphasised that the data for this study was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic altered social interactions, as well as how people went about their work, studies, spending their spare time, and buying. People were living, shopping, and, in many respects, thinking, differently during this time (Eger *et al.*, 2021). The prevailing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic may therefore

have contributed to the overall high mean value (M=3.7) for this factor, as shopping behaviour was curbed. Yet, the slightly higher mean values recorded for Baby Boomers (M=4.1) and Generation X (M=3.8) could be attributed to additional concerns about their health, their employment prospects, and overall societal economic conditions.

It has been stated that in response to the economic hardships in South Africa, 61% of South African customers report reducing their expenditure as a result of the financial difficulty that has been made worse by the epidemic – more so than in other countries (Hattingh & Ramlakan, 2022). The findings of Hattingh and Ramlakan's study also revealed that older generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) are more inclined to reduce their consumption of new products than the younger generations (Generation Y and Z). Findings by Leach *et al.* (2013) revealed that Baby Boomers are less materialistic than younger generations and particularly bewail heavy expenditure on consumer goods and insistence on new products. These conclusions may align with the findings of the current study as the Baby Boomer generational cohort seems to have a greater propensity to engage in reduced consumption practices.

It has been argued that South Africa has a very materialistic culture, and recent research has shown that South African adolescents are more materialistic than both older generations and young people from a chosen European sample (van Schalkwyk & Bevan-Dye, 2020). Additionally, younger generations are more consumption-orientated owing to the abundance and availability of new products and services (Hume, 2010). In some cases, this may be partially explained by the fact that those with lower socioeconomic standing or those who experienced hardship while growing up often turn to materialistic ideals and aspirations to alleviate prior experiences and feelings of inadequacy (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Nonetheless, in the pursuit of sustainability, greater effort should be devoted to sensitizing younger generations about the long-term effects of excessive consumption.

### Factor 4: Locally Produced Clothing (LPC)

The mean value for LPC (M=3.2) indicated respondents' moderate support of locally produced apparel. Levene's test for equality of variances was found to comply with the homogeneity assumption for the present analysis, $F(3.78) = 0.033$, $p = 0.992$. The ANOVA results showed a statistically significant difference between the generational cohorts [$F(3.78) = 3.487$, $p = 0.015$], with Baby Boomers achieving the highest mean value for LPC (M=3.43), followed by Generation X (M=3.22), Y (M=3.17) and Z (M=3.09).

**TABLE 4.7: Tukey Post Hoc test: Locally produced clothing per generational cohort**

| Generation | Generational Cohorts | Mean | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | Gen Y | 3.17 | -.08194 | .07588 | .702 |
| | Gen X | 3.22 | -.12982 | .08437 | .415 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.43 | -.34228* | .10823 | .009 |
| Gen Y | Gen Z | 3.09 | .08194 | .07588 | .702 |
| | Gen X | 3.22 | -.04788 | .08726 | .947 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.43 | -.26034 | .11050 | .087 |
| Gen X | Gen Z | 3.09 | .12982 | .08437 | .415 |
| | Gen Y | 3.17 | .04788 | .08726 | .947 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.43 | -.21246 | .11649 | .263 |
| Baby Boomers | Gen Z | 3.09 | .34228* | .10823 | .009 |
| | Gen Y | 3.17 | .26034 | .11050 | .087 |
| | Gen X | 3.22 | .21246 | .11649 | .263 |

While a recent poll found that 58% of South African consumers are now inclined to purchase a broader range of products than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic, it also specifically highlights the fact that 55% of South African consumers prefer to support small local businesses for goods produced and manufactured in South Africa (Nielsen, 2022). As shown in **Table 4.7** the Tukey post hoc test revealed a significant difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Z, concerning the support of LPC. Prior research findings confirmed that older generations in South Africa display higher levels of ethnocentrism for the protection of local economic growth against foreign products, compared to the youngest generations (Pentz, Terblanche & Boshoff, 2014). This may in part be attributed to the Baby Boomer's in-store shopping preferences, which makes them more likely to support local stores and proudly South African brands, compared to Generation Y and Z consumers who seem to show greater interest in online shopping methods (Statista, 2021) and with that a broader spectrum of international brands.

It has been found that Millennials/ Generation Y perceive international fashion companies more favourably than local South African brands (Mason, 2020). The results of the study done by Mason (2020) furthermore conclude that international fashion brands have more brand equity than local fashion firms. This was consistent with earlier research conducted by Krupka, Ozretić Došen and Previšić (2014) that found that consumers had a more favourable impression of global fashion companies than local brands. Similarly, another local study also concluded that Generation Y had a higher purchase intention towards international brands such as H&M than towards local brands such as Mr Price (Coetzee, 2018).

### Factor 5: Repurposed Clothing (RC)

The fifth and final factor, namely RC, obtained the second highest mean value (M=3.6) indicating respondents' frequent engagement in practices relating to the repurposing of garments such as upcycling, repairing, and/ or recycling, all of which ultimately extends the lifespan of clothing items whilst preventing them from ending up in landfill. The ANOVA results showed a statistically significant difference between the various generational cohorts' engagement in RC [F(3.78) = 4.848, p = 0.002]. The highest mean value was recorded for Baby Boomers (M=3.84), followed by Generation X (M=3.62), Z (M=3.52) and Y (M=3.48).

**TABLE 4.8: Tukey Post Hoc test: Repurposed clothing per generational cohort**

| Generation | Generational Cohorts | Mean | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | Gen Y | 3.48 | .04368 | .06803 | .918 |
| | Gen X | 3.62 | -.09282 | .07565 | .610 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.84 | -.31327* | .09704 | .007 |
| Gen Y | Gen Z | 3.52 | -.04368 | .06803 | .918 |
| | Gen X | 3.62 | -.13650 | .07824 | .301 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.84 | -.35695* | .09907 | .002 |
| Gen X | Gen Z | 3.52 | .09282 | .07565 | .610 |
| | Gen Y | 3.48 | .13650 | .07824 | .301 |
| | Baby Boomers | 3.84 | -.22045 | .10445 | .151 |
| Baby Boomers | Gen Z | 3.52 | .31327* | .09704 | .007 |
| | Gen Y | 3.48 | .35695* | .09907 | .002 |
| | Gen X | 3.62 | .22045 | .10445 | .151 |

The results in **Table 4.8** tie together with the first factor that also revealed significant differences between Baby Boomers and the younger generations. Baby Boomers were highly influenced by the post-World War II context and other hardships during the years in which they were growing up (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). As a consequence, they may experience more product attachment than younger generations and therefore tend to keep items for longer (Ceballos & Min, 2020). This might suggest that Baby Boomers would be more inclined to fix or repurpose their clothing items rather than buy something new. Additionally, research mentioned that older generations, such as Baby Boomers, are more likely to participate in textile recycling (Joung & Kim-Vick, 2018). In general, it has been observed that the frequency of garment repairs rises with age (Laitala & Klepp, 2018). Similarly, Generation Y also seems more likely to participate in repair behaviours than the younger Generation Z (McQueen *et al.*, 2022). This correlation between age and repair may be explained by improved abilities, greater disposable income, and/or the use of professional repair services and/or the purchasing of more expensive, longer-lasting apparel. On the other hand, it may also point to frugality. A more in-depth investigation is needed to uncover the underlying reasons for repurposed clothing consumption practices.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that despite Generation Z's seemingly greater concern for the environment, they are surrounded with purchasing possibilities that make thoughtless consumption simpler than ever, making them more willing to participate in fast fashion consumption compared to the older generations (Edelson, 2022). The low initial cost of acquiring fashionable clothing may also mean that youthful buyers are less inclined to repair clothing when it does sustain damage. Other obstacles to performing repairs could include limited access to repair tools, a lack of repair expertise, or a lack of availability of people who could do repairs. Thus, younger consumers' inclination for "repair resources" is another important topic of inquiry in garment life-extension strategies that could be investigated in future studies (McQueen *et al.*, 2022).

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the demographic profile of the sample as well as the results of the EFA and ANOVAS that were pursued as part of the objectives of this study. The initial sections of the chapter described the demographic profile of the total sample that was recruited for the original 2021 questionnaire. The data collected from this questionnaire served as the basis for the dataset used in this study. The inferential statistics commenced with EFA, resulting in the identification of five factors relating to voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices that were labelled as "ethical and sustainable clothing consumption", "handcrafted clothing consumption", "reduced consumption", "locally produced consumption" and "repurposed clothing". One-way Analysis of Variances (ANOVAS) was conducted to determine significant differences across different generational cohorts and voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in terms of the five factors identified by the EFA. The final chapter of this study provides an overview of the findings, the conclusions drawn from them as well as implications for future research and limitations of the current study.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is noted that consumer behaviour, especially amongst various generational cohorts, is not constant and may vary across situations with several factors that affect the behaviour in question (Kumar, 2014). The main aim of this study was thus to explore generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in the local South African context. The main findings and conclusions derived from this research will be summarised in the following sections, including a discussion of the practical implications of the study's findings. Additionally, the limitations of the study are also recognised while recommendations for future research are proposed. The chapter concludes with some thoughts surrounding the principal outcomes of the study.

## 5.2 REFLECTION OF STUDY

Previous research about the influencing factors of pro-environmental behaviour and green consumption (which form part of voluntary simplistic lifestyles) has for example identified various demographic and psychological determinants (Nguyen *et al*., 2017). Taking the main aim of this study into account, age and membership to a specific generational cohort can arguably be seen as a significant influence on consumers' clothing consumption behaviour and thus could play a role in the adoption of voluntary simplistic lifestyles and practices. The conceptual framework for this study was aligned with current theoretical insights and the objectives identified for this study. The objectives entailed exploring consumers' engagement in different dimensions of voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices and also investigating whether potential differences exist among the various generational cohorts' engagement in these practices based on the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory. In his review of the literature surrounding voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour, Cinar (2020) highlights, amongst others, a relationship between voluntary simplicity and variables such as socio-demographic characteristics, environmental movements, consumers' attitudes and shopping motivations. Socio-demographics such as age, gender, income, education and social status, may therefore still feature as a point of interest when profiling green consumers and green purchase behaviour (Kumar, 2014), despite some critique raised against it (Čater

& Serafimova, 2019; Larson & Farac, 2019). According to one line of inquiry, the assumptions of the Generational Cohort Theory may be implemented and used to segment the market in ways beyond those based on aggregated demographic variables such as age, gender, and income (Hung *et al*., 2007). More specifically, the Generational Cohort Theory underscores a more credible and stable basis for age segmentation, which incorporates an understanding of underlying consumer motivations that accompany particular generational segments.

Against this backdrop, the data pertaining to this investigation was initially collected in 2021 for the Consumer Science fourth-year Clothing Retail Management research project, and thereafter served as the basis for this research study that was narrowed in scope to explicitly explore generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. While the study specifically focused on generational cohorts as a topic of interest, voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour, was extensively conceptualised and specific attention was devoted to underlying dimensions as highlighted in current theoretical insights and literature. The scale items included in the survey questionnaire for voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices were derived from existing scales developed and adapted by Reis (2019) as well as Taljaard and Sonnenberg (2019) and Taljaard (2020) to measure voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour. The scale items tapped into voluntary simplistic dimensions that relate to material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness, and human scale within the context of clothing consumption practices.

From the initial responses to the survey questionnaire, 788 responses were deemed complete and incorporated into the final data set for analysis. The data analysis commenced with a descriptive analysis of the demographic variables, followed by an Exploratory Factor Analysis (Centobelli *et al.*) of the responses to the voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices to determine which factor items should be retained for the purpose of this study. Lastly, One-way analysis of variances (Inanova *et al.*) was implemented to investigate whether any significant differences were present in the various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices.

## 5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The sample of this study comprised both male and female respondents who belong to various population groups and who, for this study, had to be 18 years and older. The study required the insight of both genders to allow for a balanced gender perspective on various generational cohorts' engagement in voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour. Acknowledging the diversity of the larger population of South Africa, effort was devoted toward recruiting individuals from a variety of population groups including Asian, Black, Coloured, Indian and

White respondents. Furthermore, the respondents were not restricted in terms of specific household incomes or levels of education. The sample of the study was obtained using non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The most prominent generational cohort in this sample was Generation Z, which may be attributed to convenience sampling. More specifically, students, who form part of younger generational cohorts, assisted in recruiting respondents and may therefore have approached their younger generational counterparts to complete the survey.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used in the study, including EFA and ANOVAS. For each of the five factors identified, the EFA provided loadings that were suitably isolated with no cross-loadings found on any factor. The five factors derived from the EFA were subsequently labelled as “Ethical and sustainable clothing consumption”, “Handcrafted clothing consumption”, “Reduced consumption”, “Locally produced clothing”, and “Repurposed clothing”. The factor means indicate that respondents’ engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices varied from moderate to more frequent engagement, with ethical and sustainable clothing consumption (M=2.9) and uniquely handcrafted clothing consumption (M=3.0), achieving slightly lower means than reduced consumption (M=3.7), support of locally produced clothing (M=3.2) as well as repurposed clothing consumption (M=3.6). According to the data analysis, reduced clothing consumption achieved the highest mean, which may indicate respondents’ strong perspectives on acquiring clothing based on necessity. The fact that data for the study was gathered during the COVID pandemic, may have contributed to the higher mean obtained for reduced clothing consumption since overall consumption was limited during this time, and consumers’ spending on clothing items was restricted.

For this study, an ANOVA was used to seek significant differences across the different generational cohorts, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z in terms of the five identified voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices. The resulting ANOVA models for ethical and sustainable clothing consumption, reduced consumption, the support of locally produced clothing and repurposed clothing consumption suggested significant differences between the older and younger cohorts. In contrast, the ANOVA model yielded no significant differences among cohorts for handcrafted clothing consumption. In particular, the results revealed that older generations (especially Baby Boomers) seem to be more inclined to engage in ethical and sustainable clothing consumption, reduced consumption, locally produced clothing and repurposed clothing consumption. These results are somewhat contradictory to previous empirical research findings which reveal that younger generations are more inclined to consume green products and sustainable alternatives (Ha-Brookshire & Norum, 2011; Nikolić *et al*., 2022). It becomes apparent that the

findings of studies conducted abroad are not necessarily applicable to the South African context. In comparison to typical first-world nations, South Africa has substantially less of a focus on sustainable behaviour. In addition, compared to consumers in industrialised nations, those residing in South Africa have had relatively limited exposure to sustainability initiatives (Bisschoff & Liebenberg, 2016). Yet, this does not adequately explain why older generations would be more inclined to engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption compared to their younger generational cohorts and thus require deeper thought surrounding current theoretical insights to derive relevant conclusions.

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicated that, in comparison to younger generations (Generation Y and Z), older generations such as Baby Boomers are more inclined to engage in voluntary simplistic behaviour such as purchasing sustainable products and supporting green companies. In theory, Baby Boomers are more interdependent than their younger generational counterparts. Interdependent people are more likely to display higher ethical standards and increased concern for community issues, which in turn leads them to feel guilty about ethical problems and prompts them to engage in remedial action (Ham *et al*., 2022). However, it is also important to note that the typical traits associated with generational cohorts such as the "Millennials" and "Baby Boomers" in other countries such as the US may not always translate into a nation such as South Africa. For instance, South African Baby Boomers led radically different lives from their American counterparts. While the post-World War II US Baby Boomers saw freedom and growth, the South African Boomers saw the advent of Apartheid and a surge in racialized inequality, as well as economic progress and increasing industrialization. Those who were born pre-apartheid, even during apartheid, grew up at a time when there were deep racial divides and the country experienced hardship. Many disadvantaged segments had to work particularly hard to acquire what they had; thus, it is believed that they are more self-motivated (Harris & Mahlaba, 2023) and willing to extend their concern toward the larger community and embrace a selfless approach. The concept of Ubuntu (i.e. “I am what I am because of who we all are”) may therefore be of particular value to the older South African generational cohorts (Tusasiirwe *et al.*, 2021).

Contradictory the results of the ANOVA for the second factor that revolved around uniquely handcrafted clothing consumption provided no significant differences. Due to the intricacy of crafts, traditional handcrafted fashion products are typically priced higher than ordinary fashion products. The premium cost often becomes a barrier between intention and actual consumption (Legere & Kang, 2020). Generation Z consumers often have less disposable income and are seemingly very price-sensitive (Gomes *et al.*, 2023). This may align with the present results of this research, in that the majority of respondents indicated a monthly

household income of less than R5000. On the other hand, the findings of this study further revealed that older generations (Baby boomers and Generation X) are more inclined to reduce their consumption of products than the younger generations (Generation Y and Z). It has been suggested that South Africa has a very materialistic culture, and a recent study demonstrated that South African teenagers are more materialistic than both older generations and young people from a selected European sample (van Schalkwyk & Bevan-Dye, 2020). Thus, although the younger generations may have less disposable income and are characterised as price-sensitive, they are seemingly not as motivated to engage in reduced consumption as the older generations and may be very specific about their preferences in adopting particular sustainable alternatives.

To further expand on the above, there was a significant difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Z in terms of their support of locally produced clothing. According to a recent poll, Baby Boomers favoured in-store buying, whereas many Generation Z and Y shoppers expressed a stronger interest in internet purchasing with a broader array of international brands to choose from (Statista, 2021). In this regard, it may be argued that Baby Boomers are more inclined to support local businesses and proudly South African brands as a result of their preferred shopping style. Yet, according to research by Pentz *et al.* (2014), older South African generations exhibit greater degrees of ethnocentrism for the defence of domestic economic growth against imports. Finally, the results of the study further concluded that Baby Boomers are more inclined to fix or repurpose their clothing. Additional research suggests that older generations are also more likely to participate in textile recycling (Joung & Kim-Vick, 2018). It is argued that the low initial cost of acquiring fast fashion clothing may also mean that youthful buyers are less inclined to repair clothing when it does sustain damage. There might be several additional reasons for this disparity between younger and older generations' engagement in repurposed clothing consumption such as a lack of repair, upcycling and/ or downcycling knowledge, restricted access to required tools, equipment and facilities/ services that might prevent younger cohorts from repairing or repurposing clothing items. Such aspects should be further investigated and may serve as one of the future research recommendations of this study.

## 5.5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The primary goal for marketers is to research consumers in order to comprehend their personality traits, buying habits, and influencing elements that satisfy their needs and desires (Saygılı, 2017). Marketers must additionally devise strategies while considering the aspects that influence customers' decision-making and selection processes (Anvar & Venter de Villiers, 2014). Therefore, in order to effectively impact their target audiences, marketers need to have a solid grasp of those markets. The findings of this study provide a foundation that could be

used practically to profile local consumers who engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption behaviour and provide marketers with guidelines to refine marketing strategies, specifically in terms of generational cohorts. As shown in this study, and in prior empirical research (Nguyen et al., 2017) demographic variables such as age and voluntary simplistic consumption behaviour may be strongly related. In order to profile voluntary simplistic consumers and their habits, socio-demographic factors including age, gender, income, education, and social standing may therefore still be taken into consideration (Kumar, 2014).

The results of this study which highlight differences in generational cohorts' engagement in voluntarily simplistic clothing consumption behaviour can give marketers pointers for honing their marketing campaigns to appeal to particular generational cohorts. Generation Z and Y are the tech-savvy generations (Chaney *et al.*, 2017; Gomes *et al.*, 2023), and whilst they will teach their older counterparts how to use technology, marketing to the younger generations will have to take a different approach than marketing to Baby Boomers (Lister, 2023). Younger generations are reshaping the way that products are being marketed by being unresponsive to traditional marketing strategies. Therefore, non-traditional marketing tactics would include a bigger focus on innovation and should take an approach that provides a newer perspective and solution to a collective problem (Lister, 2023). Generation Z and Y are more active on social media and thus, good reviews are a great way to indirectly market sustainable alternatives to this generation. In contrast to the younger generations, marketing to Baby Boomers would include more traditional strategies such as taking advantage of their loyalty to locally produced products, and promoting a product of consistent quality that does not have to be replaced and/ or repurposed in a short amount of time thereby reducing their overall consumption.

According to Smith (2010), firms should try to set an example for better sustainable conduct because environmental deterioration and unsustainable consumption are directly related to bad business practices. Companies should use sustainable marketing to fundamentally adjust their practices to have a less negative environmental impact. However, business owners should regularly assess customer support for such activities and adjust their marketing initiatives, campaigns, and tactics as necessary. Furthermore, specific strategies could be categorized and implemented under the various voluntary simplistic dimensions identified throughout this study. For example, to stimulate ethical and sustainable clothing consumption, companies can implement numerous strategies throughout the entire supply chain such as incorporating eco-friendly materials in the production or packaging. Utilizing sustainable resources or products with smaller environmental impacts would ultimately reduce the effect of raw material extraction and aid in the preservation of natural resources. Handcrafted clothing and reduced consumption present sustainable strategies that involve reducing resource consumption in products, production processes and energy use in business

operations. Marketing and emphasising traditional craftsmanship of the clothing will enhance the idea of exclusivity and uniqueness to the product. Furthermore, emphasizing quality over quantity may infuse the idea of clothing longevity and slow fashion as opposed to fast fashion and passing seasonal trends.

In addition, clothing marketers should earnestly promote locally produced products, thereby creating demand for local manufacturing, and utilising resources in the local market. Producing and manufacturing locally will eliminate emission-causing shipping methods of imports, and thereby allow businesses to decrease the impact of product distribution on the environment whilst demonstrating their dedication to environmental stewardship. To facilitate repurposed consumption practices companies could devise ethical waste management and recycling programs and then encourage their customers to partake in such initiatives. One of the current examples in the industry is the H&M Garment Collecting Programme which allows customers to bring their unwanted clothing to stores, which is then recycled or donated. H&M has recently also launched a rental service where customers can rent outfits from their conscious exclusive collections (H&M, 2023). These tactics encourage the repurposing of clothing and extending the longevity of garments while also contributing to a company's success and brand reputation, attracting environmentally conscious and voluntary simplistic consumers, and actively pursuing a sustainable future.

From a theoretical point of view, limited research has focused on consumers' tendency to engage in voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. This constitutes a gap in the current literature. The results of this study therefore provide important theoretical insight and evidence on consumers' engagement in voluntary simplistic clothing practices during the pandemic, particularly within the context of the local South African market. The Generational Cohort Theory, which served as the study's basis, also helped to grasp and interpret additional pertinent ideas that may impact voluntary, simple, and sustainable consumption behaviour. Despite the benefits and insights that this study provided it had a few limitations that should be documented and taken into consideration going forward into future research.

## 5.6 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The sample of the study was recruited employing non-probability, convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Although sampling techniques such as convenience and snowball sampling were deemed appropriate for the exploratory purposes of this study, and despite efforts to recruit a sample with more diversity, the majority of the sample belonged to the white population with most of the respondents earning a relative monthly household income of less than R5 000, followed by those who earn between R5 001 and R15 000. it is important to note

that the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the larger South African population. The most prominent generational cohort in this sample was Generation Z, which may be attributed to convenience sampling. Respondents were recruited by final year Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students from the University of Pretoria, who may have approached their fellow students and friends to participate in the study. The majority of the respondents who participated formed part of the white population and prominently resided in the Gauteng region. Therefore, the datasets that were used for this study did not reflect the general population of South Africa. Even though the results of the study cannot be generalized to the larger population it can be used as a preliminary basis for future studies. It should also be noted that the primary focus of this research was on generational cohorts. In this regard, an adequate number of respondents were included for each cohort to allow for the statistical analysis that was applied. However, future research may benefit from more encompassing and representative samples to represent the many consumer groups that make up the general South African consumer population.

Since South Africa is made up of a variety of unique and complex cultures that may influence the applicability of the practices included in this research, it is advised that a fair distribution of ethnicities should be gathered for further empirical testing of the findings. These results might also be used to give an overview of any potential distinctions in behavioural acceptability across various ethnic or cultural groups. Such findings might give marketers crucial knowledge for enhancing their marketing strategies to address or target particular consumption behaviours. Over the past 30 years, the issue of standardisation or adaptation of marketing strategies in the global market has been prevalent in literature (Brei, Camargo & Engels, 2011). The diversity of consumer attitudes and perspectives on sustainable clothing consumption across boundaries has received little attention in current literature. Therefore, marketing researchers should support more such studies to better comprehend the emergence of consumer cultures in particular economies and promote more effective marketing approaches across the global marketplace.

In addition, the research was conducted to accumulate quantitative data and as such, for future studies, it is suggested to approach it as either a qualitative or a mixed-method study. This way, the research would demand more in-depth insights and probably provide more in- depth results. Moreover, the topic of the study itself pertains to clothing consumption practices exclusively. Future empirical investigations could explore other product categories along with the employment of a mixed-method approach allowing for the practical implementation of additional research techniques to gain an even deeper and more extensive comprehension of the voluntary simplistic topic. It was found that young consumers were for example less likely to repair or repurpose clothing due to the cheap initial cost of purchasing fashionable items.

Yet, there may also be other underlying causes which require further insight that can be addressed in future studies.

Another crucial area that can be investigated in future research is the issue surrounding reduced consumption and whether the findings of this study will hold true in the post-pandemic era. Reduced consumption is crucial in the pathway toward a more sustainable future. Yet it remains a controversial issue in emerging economies such as South Africa where economic growth is much needed and partly driven by increased consumption. Future research could help marketers navigate ways in which to induce reduced consumption patterns yet still contribute to the economic growth of the country. Research insights are much needed in providing government stakeholders with information on how to implement policy and address the demands of future generations. Government regulation may be the only way in which companies can be forced to be truly sustainable, whilst remaining competitive role players in the fashion industry. This regulation may take the form of enacting eco-tariffs, taxes, or fines for fashion businesses that employ unsustainable practices, whilst benefitting those that deliver sustainable alternatives to consumers. With this being said there is still much scope for further insight into voluntary simplistic consumption practices in the local context.

Overall, this study lays the groundwork for further research into voluntary simplicity in the context of a growing market. It is fairly apparent that excessive consumption has a negative impact and propels so many facets of life into a downward spiral. Fast fashion tends to charm consumers into excessive fashion consumption driven by social imaging and the desire for social acceptance which encourages people to forge an identity based on the constant upkeep of fashion. Voluntary simplicity opposes such consumption by advocating reduced consumption and the selection of local, sustainable, and ethical alternatives. Such practices may have gained more traction during the COVID-19 pandemic due to resource scarcity and thus forced consumers to re-consider their consumption habits and avoid unnecessary consumption. Yet, whether the continued support of such consumption habits will prevail post-pandemic remains questionable. All stakeholders in the clothing and fashion supply chain have a role to play in ensuring a sustainable future (not just the producers of fashion) and therefore efforts toward voluntary simplicity must be continually promoted among local consumers, especially younger generations which have much to lose if the sustainable goals are not achieved.

"*Everyone can do simple things to make a difference, and every little bit really does count" – Stella McCartney*

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# ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Consumer and Food Sciences
July 2021

**The influence of social media on South African consumers' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in South Africa.**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in this study that will be used for the completion of the 2021 final year BConSci Clothing Retail Management research project. The purpose of this research project is to explore **the influence social media on South African consumers' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in South Africa.**

**Voluntary simplicity** may be defined as a way of life in which individuals choose to minimise their negative effect on the natural and social environment, as well as to clear their lives of clutter by reducing the amount of goods they consume or possess. Sustainable clothing practices form part of the voluntary simplistic lifestyle.

**RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

- No prior preparation is needed to complete the questionnaire.
- Please be reminded that participation is completely voluntary with no penalty or loss of benefit if you decide not to take part.
- Completion of the questionnaire takes approximately **15 minutes.**

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants' responses are strictly confidential, and only members of the research team will have access to the information. Your response will be bulked with those obtained from other participants and appropriate statistical analysis will be performed on the bulked data. At no time will personal opinions be linked to specific individuals. Data will also be safely and securely stored and will not be accessible from the public domain. The privacy and anonymity of your participation are therefore ensured.

WITHDRAWAL CLAUSE AND RIGHTS OF ACCESS TO DATA

Participants may withdraw at any stage of the research without having to explain why. By no means will your withdrawal be held against you. As a participant, you also have the right of access to your data.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND FORESEEABLE RISKS OF THE STUDY**

Findings from this research project could shed light on the influence of social capital, social influence, and social media on South African consumers' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices in South Africa. The findings could also assist clothing entrepreneurs in developing effective strategies to better promote and encourage sustainable clothing practices in South Africa. The risks associated with this research project is low to none.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Nadine Sonnenberg at nadine.sonnenberg@up.ac.za if you have any further questions or concerns relating to this study.

**CONSENT**

I have read the above and declare that I understand the information that has been provided surrounding the research project. I have been given the opportunity to contact the principal investigator to request further information about the research project. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no resulting consequences.

I indemnify the University of Pretoria and any employee or student of the University of Pretoria against any liability that I may incur during the completion of this survey.

- ○ I agree to the terms and conditions as stated above. (1)
- ○ I do not agree to the terms and conditions as stated above. (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If CONSENT I have read the above and declare that I understand the information that has been provide... = I do not agree to the terms and conditions as stated above.*

**SECTION A - SCREENING QUESTIONS**

Q1: Are you between the ages of 18 and 75?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you between the ages of 18 and 75? = No*

Q2: Do you reside in South Africa?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Do you reside in South Africa? = No*

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**FIELD WORKER QUESTION**

Q3: Please select the person that contacted you to complete the questionnaire:

▼

** Note: The names listed above are the 2021 final year B Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students.*

**SECTION B - SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE**

Q4: How active are you in using the following types of social media?

| | Not at all active (1) | Slightly Active (2) | Active (3) | Moderately Active (4) | Very active (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Networking Sites (Eg. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn) (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Microblogging (Eg. Twitter) (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Photo Sharing (Eg. Instagram, Pinterest) (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Video Sharing (Eg. Youtube, Tik Tok, Snap Chat) (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Messaging Sites (e.g. WhatsApp, WeChat) (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**SECTION C - PURPOSE**

Q5: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Undecided (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I use social media to find and spread information. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I use social media primarily for information. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I use social media to keep abreast of current events. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I use social media to keep in touch with friends. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I use social media because my friends do. (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Social media is primarily for socialising. (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**SECTION D: SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Q6: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Undecided (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interacting with people on social media makes me interested in things that happen outside my home. (5) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interacting with people on social media makes me want to try new things. (1) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Talking with people on social media makes me curious about other places in the world. (2) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interacting with people on social media makes me feel like part of a larger community. (3) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interacting with people on social media reminds me that everyone in the world is connected. (4) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| There are several people on social media I trust to help solve my problems. (6) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| There is someone on social media I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions. (7) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| There is someone on social media that I feel comfortable talking to about my personal interests. (8) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| When I feel lonely, there are several people on social media I can talk to. (9) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**SECTION E: SUMMARY OF SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING PRACTICES**

In order to complete the rest of the questionnaire we would like to summarise **SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING PRACTICES** as follows:

- **REDUCE** the amount of clothing you buy, use or throw away
- **REPAIR** your clothes or recycle it (E.g. make rags out of worn out clothing)
- **RECYCLE OR REUSE** clothing in an eco-friendly manner (E.g. donate it to friends/charities, re-sell/exchange it)
- **REFUSE** to buy clothing that is bad for the environment and rather buy 100% organic cotton or recycled polyester
- **REFUSE** to buy unethical/imported clothing brands and rather support "Proudly SA" or "Made in SA"


**Please complete the rest of the questionnaire with the above in mind.**

Q7: The following statements relate to sustainable clothing consumption practices. Please indicate your engagement in such practices:

| | Never (1) | Seldom (2) | Sometimes (3) | Often (4) | Almost always (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I try to be pro-environmental by rather shopping at places that are known to be eco-friendly. (1) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I buy clothes that are good for the environment (e.g. recycled polyester or bamboo). 12) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Whenever** it is **possible, I buy clothes with eco-**friendly features (e.g. organic cotton). (3) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| When purchasing garments, I pay attention to eco-friendly features such as organic cotton, and/or eco-friendly dyeing. (4) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I will buy clothing that is good for the environment. (5) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I support clothing labels that are produced by local South African communities. (6) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I shop at stores that promote "Proudly South African" clothing. (7) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I support clothing manufacturers who create employment and fair working conditions. (8) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I prefer clothes made in South Africa to imported brands. (9) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I prefer buying clothes made in South Africa to clothes manufactured overseas. (10) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I dispose of clothing in an eco-friendly way (e.g. donating it to charities). (11) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| If I do not wear certain clothes anymore, I pass them on to family or friends to be reused. (12) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I recycle old clothing into something new (e.g. using old T-shirts as cleaning rags). (13) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I repair my damaged clothes rather than throwing them away to reduce my waste. (14) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have clothing altered if it no longer fits me so that I can wear it again. (15) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I would much rather wear clothes that are handcrafted than clothes that are mass-produced. (16) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Whenever possible, I buy clothes with handcrafted features. (17) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Craftsmanship is important in the clothes I purchase. (18) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I prefer clothes made by handcrafted techniques. (19) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I like to be different in my choice of uniquely handcrafted clothing items. (20) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I make a conscious effort to only buy clothes that I really need. (21) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| When going to a special occasion, I rather wear something I already have than buying a new outfit. (22) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I limit my purchasing of new garments. (23) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I purchase only to fulfill my basic needs and wants. (24) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I make clothing purchases only when needed. (25) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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**SECTION F - SOCIAL INFLUENCE**

QB: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Undecided (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To make sure I do the right thing, I often search for information on social media about what other people are buying and using to be sustainable. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I often consult on social media with other people to help me choose the best sustainable clothing alternatives. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I frequently gather information from others on social media about sustainable clothing options. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I like to get the opinions of others from social media before I make sustainable clothing choices. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel more comfortable choosing sustainable clothing options when I received the opinions of others from social media. (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| It is important that my social media reference group like the sustainable clothing that I wear. (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When choosing sustainable clothing alternatives, I generally opt for those that I think others will approve on social media. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I achieve a sense of belonging on social media by wearing the same sustainable clothing that others wear. (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| If I want to be like someone who I have met on social media, I often wear the same sustainable clothing that they wear. (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I often identify with other people on social media by wearing the same sustainable clothing they wear. (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**SECTION G: OPEN ENDED QUESTION**

Q9: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your clothing consumption practices?

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**SECTION H - DEMOGRAPHICS**

QIO: Please indicate your gender:

Male (1)

Female (2)

Non-binary/ third gender (3)

I prefer not to say (4)

QII: To which age category do you belong?

18 - 24 (1)

25 - 40 (2)

41-56 (3)

57 - 75 (4)

Q12: What is your highest level of education?

Lower than Grade 12 {1)

Grade 12 (2)

Tertiary degree/diploma (3)

Postgraduate (4)

QB: Please select the province you currently reside in.

,. Eastern Cape (1) ... Western Cape (9)

*Eastern Cape /1/*

*Free State* /2/

*Gauteng /3)*

*KwaZulu -Natal /4)*

*Limpopo /5)*

*Mpumalanga /6)*

*Northern Cape (7)*

*North West (8/*

*Western Cape (9/*

Q:14 What is your approximate individual income per month (after tax deductions)?

Less than R 5 000 (1)

Between R 5 001 and R 15 000 (2)

Between R 15 001 and R 25 000 (3)

Between 25 001 and R 35 000 (4)

Between R 35 001 and R 45 000 (5)

More than R 45 000 (6)

Q15: According to the Employment Equity Act - how would you classify yourself?

Black (1)

Coloured (2)

Indian/Asian (3)

White (4)

I prefer not to say (SJ

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We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

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# ADDENDUM B: ETHICAL APPROVAL

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Ethics
CommitteeE-mail:
ethics.nas@up.ac.za

10 September 2021

ETHICS SUBMISSION: LETTER OF APPROVAL

Dr NC Sonnenberg
Department of Consumer and Food
SciencesFaculty of Natural and
Agricultural Science University of
Pretoria

Reference number: NAS288/2021
Project title: The influence of social media on consumers' voluntary simplistic clothing consumption practices inSouth Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Dr NC Sonnenberg,

We are pleased to inform you that your submission conforms to the requirements of the Faculty of Natural andAgricultural Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Please note the following about your ethics approval:

- Please use your reference number (NAS288/2021) on any documents or correspondence with the Research Ethics Committee regarding your research.
- Please note that the Research Ethics Committee may ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification, monitor the conduct of your research, or suspend or withdraw ethics approval.
- Please note that ethical approval is granted for the duration of the research (e.g. Honours studies: 1 year, Masters studies: two years, and PhD studies: three years) and should be extended when the approval period lapses.
- The digital archiving of data is a requirement of the University of Pretoria. The data should be accessible in the event of an enquiry or further analysis of the data.

Ethics approval is subject to the following:

- The ethics approval is conditional on the research being conducted as stipulated by the details of all documents submitted to the Committee. In the event that a further need arises to change who the investigators are, the methods or any other aspect, such changes must be submitted as an Amendment for approval by the Committee.
- **Applications using GM permits:** If the GM permit expires before the end of the study, please make an amendment to the application with the new GM permit before the old one expires
- **Applications using Animals:** NAS ethics recommendation does not imply that Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) approval is granted. The application has been pre-screened and recommended for review by the AEC. Research may not proceed until AEC approval is granted.

Post approval submissions including application for ethics extension and amendments to the approved application should be submitted online via the Ethics work centre.

We wish you the best with your

research.Yours sincerely,

# ADDENDUM C: TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

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| 21% | 18% | 9% | 6% |
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