

Article

Key Issues in Slow Fashion: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives

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Abstract: The study seeks to explore and synthesize current issues in Slow Fashion and discuss potential future directions of the industry. While there are multiple definitions of the term, Slow Fashion typically describes long-lasting, locally manufactured clothing, primarily made from sustainably sourced fair-trade fabrics. It affords latitude to individual style, fosters education about clothing and emphasizes durability. While several challenges regarding the implementation of Slow Fashion principles in current society remain, the study offers an overview of the current state, and presents a fashion matrix-based framework for outlining the position of the Slow Fashion movement within industry-specific fashion segments and uses the matrix to present current knowledge and review future challenges. The support of networks serves as an indispensable tool for Slow Fashion designers, keeping them abreast of the competition.

Keywords: Slow Fashion; Fast Fashion; sustainability; creative industry; support of networks

1. Introduction

Fashion is akin to art, which reflects the uniqueness of a time, place, and culture. If we look at forms of dressing throughout the world and from a historical perspective, we would see that “fashion” has been an expression of culture, geography, climate, and personal taste. For centuries, fashion has been a synonym of what was considered to be beautiful. Changing aesthetic ideals have affected the phenomenon of fashion. In recent decades, for the first time in history, clothes are “ripped, frayed, distressed, rearranged and otherwise undone as a style statement”, creators are motivated not only by a pursuit of creativity and, in this instance, by sustainability, but equally important, by economic reasons [1] (p. 6). Nowadays, designers introduce clothing from recycled fabrics and never-thought-of materials. It cannot be assumed that Slow Fashion relies on the same business principles as Fast Fashion just by substituting trendy outfits with timeless, high-quality, higher-price collections; Slow Fashion represents a separate perception of business conduct [2].

This relatively new concept that stems from the Slow Food Movement, and has been exponentially examined in academia, emerged as an antidote to pure consumerism, and has quietly grown to the notion that individuals reconnect to their community “through the food on their plate” [2,3]. While there are “parallels between Slow Fashion and Slow Food” [4] (p. 229), it could be seen as a guide for other fashion concepts. Far from being widely accepted as a status quo, are the definitions of “environmental, ecological, green, sustainable, ethical, recycled, organic, and inclusive (universal) fashion and fashion design, (which) as terms, coexist, cross-fertilize, and are readily confused” [5] (p. 525) although they mirror unmistakable parallels. Holt believes that Slow Fashion can include a variety of items, including a customized dress from Goodwill that costs five dollars, or a piece of clothing by Miranda Caroligne that costs seven hundred dollars and is made by

hand from clothing scraps [6]. Thompson goes even beyond the above-mentioned price level, entering the segment of couture when pointing to Vivienne Westwood and Martin Margiela as these couturiers have “demonstrated the ability to create multiple new garments through a basic process of deconstruction” [1] (p. 7) which presents one of the possible venues [6].

The establishment of “green” fashion weeks such as London’s “Esthetica” where eco-designers are introduced and presented [1] beyond “traditional” fashion weeks can be interpreted as a change that holds a promise of a wider acceptance of the concepts. The Slow Fashion boundaries have not been clearly defined within academic environments (e.g., [7,8]). It is not unusual to find various embellished descriptions of the movement; it is defined as an antidote to Fast Fashion without a formal definition [8] or as a lifestyle [9] although the Fletcher’s widely recognized definition is based on the value of sustainability along with the following criteria: local production, traditional values, ecosystem preservation, diversity of sources, and responsible approach [2,10]. Freestone and McGoldrick have expanded Fletcher’s definition by adding ethical choices made by consumers [11]. Fast Fashion, on the other hand, is clearly defined. From a linguistic standpoint, slow and fast are in clear opposition; from the perspectives of Slow Movement, Slow and Fast represent different, not opposite attitudes, business processes, frameworks, and values [2]. Fast fashion is an effective business strategy that is linked to an efficient supply chain management, where the definition of “efficient” in this context encompasses mass production with a high response rate to customer demand and enhanced design; the two practices are expected to be complementary rather than substitutional [12]. Extensive overtime hours resulting from intense time pressure, unhealthy working conditions, involuntary separation from the families living in remote rural areas, harassment and depression of oftentimes severely underpaid overseas workers seems to be in strong contrast with a glossy side of Fast Fashion [13].

2. Slow Fashion: Current Knowledge and Challenges

While the direct distinction between Slow Fashion and the definition of their consumers [14] in current literature has been vague, the purpose of this paper is to introduce a fashion matrix framework that outlines and defines the six key fashion segments: Haute Couture, Prêt-à-couture, Prêt-à-porter, Fast Fashion brands, Mass market, and Basics/commodity fashion. The paper compares Slow Fashion to the respective above-stated areas in terms of 8 identified factors: (1) Price; (2) Quality; (3) Cost; (4) Style; (5) Service; (6) Quantity; (7) Customers; (8) Response to trends and Networks. These aspects call for a comprehensive overview, which we aim to provide to further distinguish the position of the Slow Fashion movement within industry-specific fashion segments as well as to explore the factors that constitute key management issues to be addressed. The authors excluded the sustainability factor from the above-introduced fashion matrix as it presents an indisputable landmark cornerstone of Slow Fashion and the Slow Movement in general. For each factor, we initially synthesize current research, and suggest possible future challenges to be explored.

3. Fashion Matrix

The authors have identified eight factors that determine each fashion segment and provide a qualitative overview of their traits. Figure 1 Fashion Matrix outlines each segment and visually summarizes its corresponding position in the fashion hierarchy. Several unique aspects make Slow Fashion a more complex area. The matrix represents a visual summary of perceived division of the fashion industry along with their characteristics. Under the umbrella of Fast Fashion, we have included typical Fast Fashion brands such as Zara and H&M followed by mass market fashion and basic/commodity fashion. On the other hand, in the upper segment of the matrix, we have positioned Haute Couture along with one-of-a-kind and artistic collections, Prêt-à-couture and Prêt-à-porter. Vintage collections have been excluded from the evaluation although they represent a unique category and major brands such as Topshop and Urban Outfitters would dedicate a space “to vintage concessions” [1] (p. 9). The horizontal boundaries between these two principal segments are

opaque. The reason for this unclear division roots from the fact that most of eminent existing fashion players has neither explicitly adopted nor rejected the novel concept of Slow Fashion. The diagonal line shows the hierarchical ascending order of the segments. The left axis represents the range from low to high regarding selling price, quality of fabrics used, cost and quality of the production, style, and the level of service. From this perspective, Haute Couture ranks “High”, while Commodity Fashion ranks “Low”. On the other hand, the right axis identifies Haute Couture by a “Small” number of items sold and a “Small” customer base. The association to a specific consumer base and a life span of a product divide the Matrix vertically. In opposition, a “Low” response to trends and a “Low” number of seasons characterize both Commodity Fashion and Haute Couture.

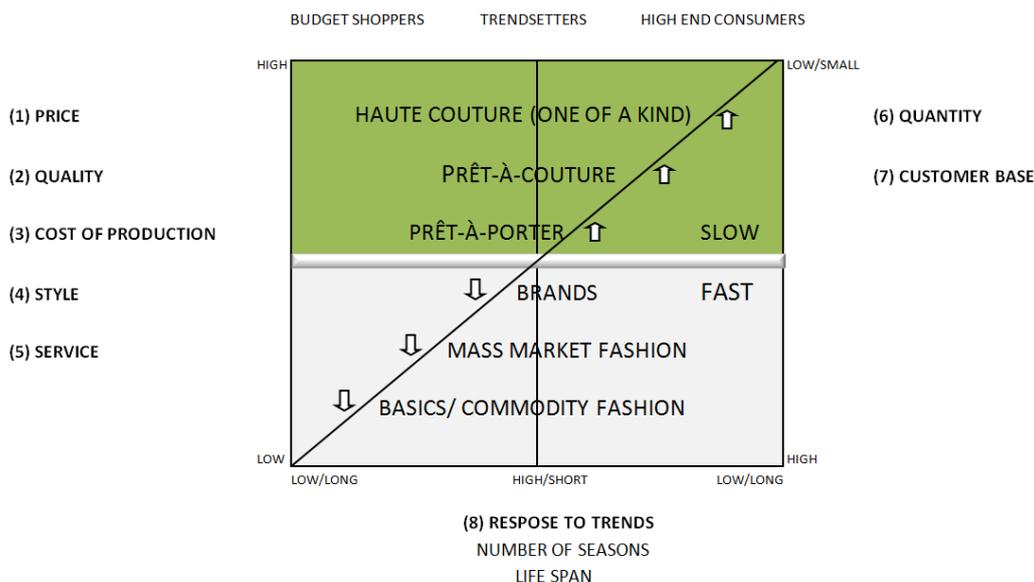


Figure 1. Fashion Matrix. Numbers in parentheses correspond to factors as identified in the text.

3.1. Price

The Fashion Matrix visually represents various aspects of existing fashion segments. Firstly, it provides an overview of Slow Fashion in terms of price point, and the chosen pricing strategies [15]. Ethical Slow Fashion consumers demand goods that are produced in “sweat-free” manufacturing, and various studies have shown that, in such instances, people are willing to accept a higher price tag (e.g., [6,16,17]). One in three respondents were defined as highly involved in the Slow Fashion group, and thus willing to accept a 30 to 40 percent price premium compared to Fast Fashion products [14]. On the other hand, the conventional, exclusivity-oriented, and low-involved groups’ acceptable price premium does not exceed the 20 to 25 percent range [14]. Consumers have begun to question the unethical practices of brands [18]; however, another study documented that unethical practices have no effect on fashion purchases [19], and none of their respondents boycotted a product due to a company’s unethical practices in a developing country or negative publicity, as many consumers are unfamiliar with the business practices of fashion companies [20]. As the transparency notion has become a burning element of the fashion industry, low prices are losing momentum; yet the question of how to address the issue is of concern to many professionals within the fashion industry [9]. The concept of Slow Fashion tends to be highly personalized and encourages the consumer to examine not only the end product, but the origin of items purchased. Slow Fashion enquires into the nature of the product and the way it was produced [6]. A sustainable solution will encompass both the aspect of premium pricing acceptance and transparency. Is transparent pricing a justifiable answer to higher prices paid for Slow Fashion products? Part of the answer may lie in adopting the concept of transparent pricing as several companies have successfully used this practice (e.g., [21]). Therefore, there is an opportunity to address this issue in the future.

3.2. Quality

Moving to the quality factor, the first and most significant step Slow Fashion designers can take to differentiate themselves from Fast Fashion retailers is to put emphasis on the quality of their fashion and the premium quality of fabrics used [4]. One of the requirements for the creation of a successful Slow Fashion brand is the incorporation of the ultimate quality of the fabrics used as the concept encourages the consumer to examine not only the design, but the origin of a fabric, or dress purchased. A “Slow” life involves emphasis on traditional values. Slow food would focus on the greater consciousness of how products are grown, cultivated, and manufactured and the same stays true for Slow Fashion. There would also be concern for the conditions under which people work, in satisfying the consumption of goods and services. Slow Movement is not a stand-alone process; it has become a part of the society transformation throughout time [2]. The gradual education that consumers have been experiencing through multimedia sources, including the explosion of social media tools, and the perceived influence of websites [22] have helped to bring about a heightened degree of awareness. Current knowledge includes: (1) Along with emphasizing the premium quality and (2) fostering education about clothing, Slow Fashion also discourages the overuse of chemicals and consequently its proliferation. Based on the above, we can pose the following questions: (1) Does education about the fashion industry represent a viable solution to the sustainability challenges? (2) Does the adoption of Slow Fashion principles contribute to the shift in current state of overconsumption?

3.3. Cost of Production

Slow Fashion designers offer timeless pieces and long-lasting value. Fast Fashion, on the other hand, employs cheap labor while taking advantage of predominantly lesser developed economies. Its mass-produced items are precisely calculated in every possible way; the layout on the fabrics is optimized by a highly computerized program, and the manufacturing process is closely monitored. Every inch of wasted fabric multiplies by thousands and millions. Fast Fashion’s supply chain responsiveness is the key reason it has outperformed many department and specialty stores [23] and explains why Slow Fashion—made from locally sourced or fair-trade materials and fabrics of higher quality—cannot compete on the cost of production. Doeringer and Crean point out that the lead time of Fast Fashion is much shorter compared to the lead time of prêt-à-porter collections [7]. Such collections are produced in as little as one month. With a little emphasis on a long-term forecast, Fast Fashion reduces lead time by adapting existing styles and designs [6,8]. Slow Fashion designers, on the other hand, must invest much more time in the realization of their projects and bear both higher overhead and variable costs. This leads to the questions: (1) Can Slow Fashion be not only attractive to the consumer but also commercially viable? (2) Can Slow Fashion meet the demand of an environmentally conscious market? Independent and environmentally conscious designers have been enthusiastic about the impact of their productions. While Fast Fashion turns a virtual blind eye to the laborer who mass produce products, Slow Fashion places focus on the individual workers. Noticeably, fashion designers in both Fast and Slow Fashion areas have a passion for what they are doing.

3.4. Style

Fashion was always meant to be a personal expression of individual style. In an age of commercialism, fashion has been transformed into an industry in which carbon copies of clothing have been mass produced. The label of “individualistic” has been hijacked by the purveyors of crass commercialism to the point that clothing is the product of an assembly line which eschews individuality and creativity. Slow Fashion transcends the notion of simply being fashionable and embraces clothing as an expression of oneself; those products should be durable and perceived as an investment [6]. Nowadays, designers introduce clothing from recycled fabrics and never-thought-of materials; they are motivated not only by creativity and by a pursuit of sustainability, but equally important, by economic reasons as the designers depend on “built-in obsolescence for further sales” [4]

(p. 230). The Slow Fashion movement hinges on creativity as it applies to the individual and serves as a means of self-expression not only from the point of view of designers, but also from the perspective of consumers. Customers choose clothing that enhance their self-image perception and become an inseparable part of their personal style [8]. What is chosen as fashion is simply not solely trendy, but it should mirror the personality of the wearer. In an age of social and environmental consciousness, consumers have become more aware; they are engaged through social media, and e-marketing [24,25], while they have been living by the tenet that for designers, to be truly timeless, one must first create something with meaning, that is unique, and then stand behind it [26]. What we need to know in terms of style: (1) Will the existence of distinctive style (Slow Fashion) win attention of environmentally conscious consumers over the trends (Fast Fashion)? It cannot be mistaken that Slow Fashion would instill the same business principles as Fast Fashion just by substituting trendy outfits by timeless, high-quality, higher-price collections; Slow Fashion represents a separate perception of business conduct [2]. Slow Fashion consumers can appreciate and are looking for unique design but (2) Is style-oriented rather than trend-oriented design the new black? According to various studies, Slow Movement and Slow Fashion do not represent a change that would be deep enough to break the cycle of Fast Fashion [2,27].

3.5. Service

An intimate boutique setting is an effective point of sale for small designers; a major barrier to such an arrangement is seen in a lack of local suppliers who would be willing to produce small quantities at a reasonable cost [7] while some markets might not be responsive [28]. Watson and Yan, however, conclude that “Slow Fashion is not identified by the type of store, but the type of clothing” [8] (p. 155). Nevertheless, unique and personalized services that cannot be provided by a mass-market firm create a key competitive advantage for Slow Fashion. Moreover, there are myriads of other opportunities for local designers; for example, tourists do not look for brands but for local designers first, followed by a distinctive personal style. Leslie et al., identified that Slow Fashion designers focus on the luxury segment, and adopt the following four strategies to distinguish themselves and thus remain competitive: (1) Aim for quality products and timeless design; (2) Serve niche markets; (3) Utilize localized suppliers; and (4) Sell through own-brand boutiques; moreover, the study suggests that by adopting Slow Fashion model, the designers are able to face increasing competition posed by Fast Fashion enterprises [4]. There are still many unanswered fundamental questions: (1) Is a customized, one-on-one experience significant enough to serve as a lasting competitive advantage? (2) How to open and manage a brand boutique with limited resources? (3) How to build a lasting relationship with a local manufacturer considering the scarcity of skilled labor and a higher price point? As mentioned above, a customized service and unique, authentic experience act as a differentiator between Slow and Fast Fashion companies. However, a key question is how deeply a customer cares about the price/quality/service ratio. Slow Fashion designers offer a unique service that cannot be provided by a mass-market firm. Such individual service offered by a designer, and the usage of the suitable marketing tools [29] and pricing strategies [30] create a key competitive advantage.

3.6. Quantity

Quantity has taken the place of high standing in the world today when compared to the counterpart of quality, but Slow Fashion encompasses the standard of quality, durability, and lasting value. Quality fashion has a longer life span, which then reduces the amount of waste that is discarded in landfills. Timeless pieces integrate the unique nature of the high-quality fabrics under the umbrella of Slow Fashion; longevity is a hallmark of this trend. Slow Fashion can be broadly defined as –long-lasting, made from recycled or organic materials [6]. Like Slow Food, Slow Fashion highlights “quality, detail, and techniques of production” [4] (p. 229), makes use of greener fibers, and aims to reduce waste and pollution, and yet, customers buy more than they need and dispose the clothing as a fashion waste [9]. To stop the vicious cycle, recycling, upcycling, creative reworking

or “stitch-and-mending (. . .) as opposed to a buy-and-throw-away ethic” are among many possible venues along with the systematic consideration for fabric composition and origin—organic natural fibers are preferred [6] (p.n.d). Moreover, donating or sharing the wardrobe with a mate limiting the unnecessary accumulation of waste present two solutions [31] for the overheated fashion system. Disposal of throwaway clothing has stretched the limits of environmental capacity and presents a major sustainability challenge; style-hungry Fast Fashion consumers are not as cognizant as others regarding the necessity of clothing recycling [32]. Therefore, we need to answer the following questions as outlined in Table 1: (1) Under what circumstances will the consumption patterns change in the near future? (2) Will Slow Fashion, which stresses quality over quantity, slower production and the consumption cycle change these consumption patterns? In an era of rapid and voluminous production and overconsumption, clothing has become a disposable product losing its appeal in a blink of an eye. Although the sustainable concept of Slow Fashion incorporates local production, high quality fabrics and small collections. Like Fast Food chains, targeting mainly young consumers, Fast Fashion garments are quickly used, “consumed”, and then discarded; paradoxically, consumers show their interest in sustainable fashion, however, continue to buy fast, inexpensive collections [33]. This represents “the apex of the consumption sustainability paradox” [34]. Material overconsumption neither brings them prolonged joy nor a well-being but the heartwarming relationships with humans do [35].

Table 1. Slow Fashion: Summary of Current Knowledge and Future Perspectives.

Factors *	Current Knowledge	Future Perspectives and Challenges
1. Price	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow Fashion consumers are willing to accept a higher price tag. Consumers question the unethical practices, but they have no effect on fashion purchases. Customers are interested in transparency. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is the current acceptable premium high enough to support Slow Fashion companies in the long run? Is transparent pricing a justifiable answer to higher prices paid for Slow Fashion products and the need for transparency?
2. Quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow Fashion emphasizes the premium quality of products and fabrics. Slow Fashion fosters education about clothing, its origin and materials used. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does education about fashion industry present a viable solution to the sustainability challenges? Does the adoption of Slow Fashion principles contribute to the shift in current state of overconsumption?
3. Cost of Production	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow Fashion is mainly locally sourced, and thus incurs higher expenses. Slow Fashion designers selling small collections bear both higher overhead and variable cost. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can Slow Fashion be not only attractive to the consumer but also commercially viable? Can Slow Fashion meet the demand of an environmentally conscious market?
4. Style	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individualistic clothing from recycled fabrics and never-thought-of materials are introduced. Designers are motivated not only by creativity and by a pursuit of sustainability, but by economic reasons, too. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Will the existence of distinctive style win attention of environmentally conscious consumers over the trends? Is style-oriented rather than trend-oriented design the new black?
5. Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personalized services create a key competitive advantage. By adopting a Slow Fashion model, the designers can face increasing competition posed by Fast Fashion enterprises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is a Slow Fashion customized, one-on-one service potential source of lasting competitive advantage? How to open and manage a brand boutique with limited resources? How to build a lasting relationship with a local manufacturer considering the scarcity of skilled labor and a higher price point?
6. Quantity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow Fashion encourages the quality over quantity mindset and lifestyle. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Under what circumstances will the consumption patterns change in the near future? Will Slow Fashion, which stresses quality over quantity, slower production and consumption cycle change these consumption patterns?
7. Customers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A typical Slow Fashion customer is represented by an educated woman supporting local community The interaction of being fashionable, perceived fashionability and system participation affects the ultimate decision on fashion consumption 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What is the current size of the market? Is it subject to shrinkage or expansion in the future? Is the Highly involved in Slow Fashion group large enough to support Slow Fashion companies?
8. Response to Trends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow Fashion does not follow quickly changing fashion trends. Slow Fashion retailer could be stigmatized. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does the limited ability to respond to the demand promptly affect the performance of the Slow Fashion houses? Does the inelasticity to trends affect the performance of the Slow Fashion houses?

* Numbers in parentheses correspond to factors and questions as identified in the text.

3.7. Customers

Differences between Fast versus Slow Fashion consumers have been sparsely examined in academia [36]. No current studies provide a comprehensive portrait of Slow Fashion consumers [14]; however, a significant amount of attention has been paid to this area, and the empirical evidence shows that these consumers are typically well-schooled women who support good things such as “local economy, fair trade and good labor prices” [4] (p. 233). Retailers notice the change in consumer behavior regarding Slow Fashion; and point out to the fact that consumers think twice before they buy [37]. The market has grown in complexity, given the high level of awareness evident with consumers. The interaction of being fashionable, perceived fashionability and system participation affects the ultimate decision on fashion consumption [38]. The main question we need to address is the current size of the market and whether it is subject to shrinkage or expansion in the future. Leslie et al., interviewed a designer who confirmed that their collections attract “people who are interested in the arts and textiles (...) architects, people who are working in creative fields and who can understand or appreciate the textile design” [4] (p. 230). The second question we need to resolve is whether the Highly Involved in Slow Fashion group as defined by Jung and Jin is large, purpose-oriented, and homogenous enough to support Slow Fashion companies in the years to come [14]. Sorting through this will allow a search for the answer as to whether Slow Fashion contributes to the shift of consumer behavior.

3.8. Response to Trends

Fast Fashion has been a hallmark of the fashion industry for several years and it has virtually characterized the market over time. Consumers go to retail stores and select what is available, as opposed to what might best reflect their personalities and inclinations. Nowadays clothing tends to be mass produced rather than being individualistic. Fast Fashion houses monitor fashion markets very closely; this provides the ability to track client preferences in a responsive manner and to respond to the demand promptly [7]. Fashion fans are seduced by an inexpensive version of latest trends presented worldwide at the most prestigious fashion weeks [37]. On the other hand, Slow Fashion can be perceived as “a stigma given to a retailer” [8] (p. 141). The negativity of this statement relies on the assumption that fashion must be up-to-date to be seen as valuable in the current world. The claim is based on the argument that Slow Fashion producers and designers are not able to follow quickly changing fashion trends, nor are they willing to, while Fast Fashion retailers always do. Obviously, a never-ending quick change in the display of collections is a core business strategy of such retailers. The empirical evidence that Slow Fashion consumers buy less at a higher quality is evident. However, we need to know whether, unlike in Fast Fashion (e.g., [12,39]), the limited ability to track Slow Fashion client preferences to respond to the demand promptly, affects the performance of the Slow Fashion companies.

3.9. Networks

These days, not only established, renowned designers but also young, coming designers have little chance but to become “slow”. In an ideal world, a recent fashion graduate would have plenty opportunities on how to start their own studio or line. They would have a choice. If looking through a skeptical lens, fashion business is a highly volatile, risky, and insecure market, and while some up-and-coming brands have hit the goldmine by exporting to the promising American market, many other brands have not succeeded [4]. However, a form of government funding might be a vital antidote [40]. In addition, a business incubation setting could increase the odds of a successful launch of a new Slow Fashion brand; it represents a great opportunity for a new fashion designer as it is dedicated to nurturing talents by matching clients with business advice, equipment, resource, and offering a support of networks and tools for better understanding of their target market [5]. As a matter of note, Toronto became the first place in the world to establish a fashion incubator in 1986, and the model was later adopted in the U.S., South Africa, and the Great Britain [4]. The most recent

fashion incubator business model has created a unique value proposition by introducing a support of network [41,42]. Networked incubators offer an unquestionable leverage for the new designers and brands by offering additional resources and thus setting them apart from the existing competition and provide them with the access to economies of scale [42]. Regional networked incubators open the doors to knowledge and network economy [42,43]. Financing, coaching, and mentoring along with access to support of networks, horizontal or vertical partners are among the most sought-after benefits [44]. Linkage to strategic partners has proven to be a feature the creative industry is looking for [45]. The intrinsic value provided by the support of networks became the visible hallmark of the most recent generation [46]. They effectively stimulate the growth and development of the competitive fashion brands, and thus stimulate local economy and sustainable development, with the emphasis on the triple bottom line [47].

4. Discussion

The study has presented a Fashion-Matrix-based framework for positioning the Slow Fashion movement within the industry-specific fashion segments and used the Matrix to outline current knowledge and to further detect and investigate future challenges. Several unique aspects make Slow Fashion a more complex area, while it is facing many challenges. Consumers appreciate and are looking for unique design, as well as willing to accept premium pricing if their needs and preferences are met. The fashion industry is “in the midst of dynamic changes”, and changes in the global economy impact it at large, and retailers and producers “need to educate the consumer about the processes used in the creation of their apparel” [9] (pp. 200, 202–203). The past years have been a period of a rapid growth in the virtual world; what is current and relevant today, will be obsolete and out-of-date tomorrow. The advent of new technologies, internet of things, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and -free stores that shape the picture of today, are just a few of the myriad of new technologies. Testing them on a larger scale and proving them viable will become a “master’s degree” for many retailers. In this article, we have discussed the future challenges that stem from the current knowledge, the constantly evolving area of operator-free automation in manufacturing, or the new fashion technologies such as 3D scanning and printing, smart fabrics development, or wearable technologies. Some brands will compete by focusing on the adoption of the latest technologies in their manufacturing process, or in-store technologies. One burning question that remains is whether Slow Fashion designers, and thus Slow Fashion will fully embark on this journey. Will they be able - not only willing—to adapt? Oftentimes, financially unaffordable at an early adoption stage, the technologies can become either an accelerator of the growth and the source of competitive advantage for an independent Slow Fashion brand, or a source of an unbearable overhead. Thanks to the forward-looking scholars, generous industry partners, and government subsidies, the new facilities such as Toronto’s Fashion Exchange have emerged. They not only facilitate the access to the newest technologies, stimulate interest of public, create awareness, inform the consumers about the on-going sustainability issues and waste disposal challenges but also serve as a platform to educate and connect the public and the scholars. Moreover, they build on the idea of the support of networks and synergetic effect of an industry-education institution partnership. To meet the demand from the industry, many “traditional” fashion schools have embarked on the sustainable journey (e.g., George Brown College, London College of Fashion). We believe that best practice of sustainable Slow Fashion will be under the radar in the coming years, and the ways in which companies will compete will diverge to a certain extent. Nevertheless, they will have to adapt in many areas, including technologies, sustainable challenges, and multichannel retailing. The study outlined several challenges that Slow Fashion must immediately or in the near future face if it has ambitions to represent commercially viable solutions that are attractive to the socially and environmentally conscious consumer.

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