



Rental Fashion: Creation of New Opportunities for Sustainable Fashion Consumption by Integrating Consumers into the Business Strategy

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Problem

Present attempts to make the fashion industry more sustainable mainly focus on innovative solutions through technological advance and have neglected to acknowledge the consumer as important driver for sustainability. In both the linear system (design-manufacturing-sales-disposal) and the circular economy, scholars and practitioners have been concentrating on product innovation and technology to solve current issues within the industry. However consumers have been identified as key driver for sustainable practices to be implemented and hence should not be excluded from today's solutions.

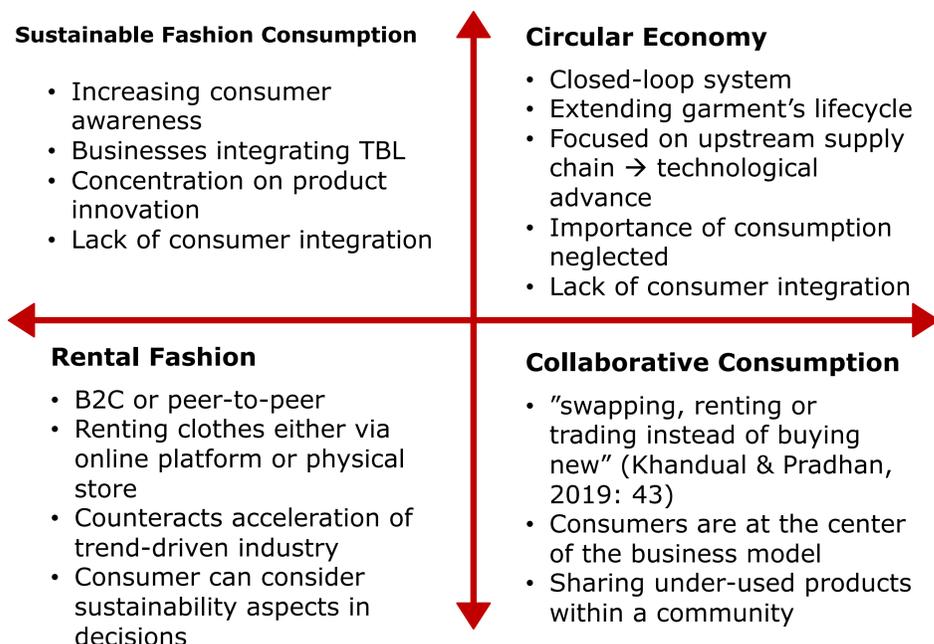
Objective

This study presents the concept of rental fashion as a possibility to facilitate sustainable consumption. The aim of this study is to find out how rental fashion creates new opportunities for sustainable fashion consumption by integrating consumers into the business strategy. The context of rental fashion companies is explored in order to answer the proposed research question and to highlight the importance of the consumer's role in sustainable fashion consumption.

Introduction

Fashion consumption can be distinguished from other products in terms of the symbolic, immaterial and hedonistic value it creates to consumers. Unfortunately, it has developed into the second largest polluter and is one of the largest consumer industries. Attempts of making the fashion industry more sustainable have not yet fully acknowledged the consumer's importance in creating sustainable consumption patterns and are mainly based on the idea of technological advance and product innovation being sufficient to solve the societal and environmental issues the industry has created. Alternative and disruptive business models based on sharing, lending or swapping have emerged and show promising potential in enabling sustainable consumption behavior. Rental fashion offers consumers the opportunity to satisfy their demand for variety while considering sustainability aspects in their consumption behavior. By exploring the context of rental fashion, this study aims at finding out how new opportunities can be created by integrating consumers into the business strategy.

Theoretical Framework



Methods

Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative Cross-Sectional Study
Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interviews Purposeful sampling (Pratt, 2009) 6 rental fashion businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently operating within Germany and/or Austria
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcripts + Coding 26 codes identified Tabular representation of data 3 steps <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify similarities and differences in data Connect data to paramount categories (e.g., community, business opportunities, collaboration etc.) Mind map that visualizes data in connection to theoretical framework

Results

Category	Main Results
Growth Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some businesses plan to expand across EU All businesses mentioned that they see the market growing
Changing Consumption Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift towards access over ownership Build strategy around consumers (mostly Gen Z) demands Increasing awareness among consumers Gap between attitude and behavior
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the core of the business model Enables accessibility and affordability of brands
Sustainable Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable way of consuming clothing without constraints
Circular Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental as part of circular economy Way to reach SDGs Extending clothing's lifecycle Promoting quality over quantity
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building communities by providing service of rental Community building enables inclusion and equality Enables extending sustainable lifestyle to other areas than clothing
Incentives for Large Fashion Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set incentives for large fashion companies to focus on consumption side Competitive advantages to engage in circular business models

Conclusions

Rental businesses enable sustainable consumption by:

- Facilitating new ways of thinking → *access over ownership*
- Educating consumers → *extending lifecycle*
- Use market imperfections of the linear fashion system → *no constraints, close attitude-behavior-gap*
- Building communities → *sharing same interests, feeling of belonging*