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English 1105: First-Year Writing

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28 November 2022

Consuming Critically, Consciously, and Confidently

New trends are being pushed out every day, whether you participate in them or not, they are always coming and going. In such a competitive industry, fashion companies are constantly trying to differentiate themselves in order to stand out from the rest— many of which believe that they can achieve this by keeping up with the current trends. Being a college student studying business, I am no stranger to the tactics and marketing strategies that brands do, particularly, in the fashion field, to attract consumers. As a result, this topic brought me to the article: “Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach”, by Patrizia Gazzola, Enrica Pavione, Roberta Pezzetti, and Daniele Grechi. Despite the large selection of articles that I could choose from, I particularly chose this one due to the fact that it did not just pique my interest as a business major, but also because, in the generation that we live in today, and as a consumer myself, it is easy to feel pressure to keep up with the latest fashion trends. However, in doing so, this has ultimately led us down a path of overconsumption, immense landfill waste, and overall great damage to our environment. This is why working towards a greener and more sustainable future is imperative.

The article that I have picked focuses on current popular fashion trends, specifically around sustainability and a circular economy, and how it is influencing a new generation of consumers. The purpose of this is to then present research to show which trends will most likely

remain significant in the fashion industry’s future due to the impact of consumers and how this is relevant in regard to our environment. As a matter of fact, this could be better understood through a thorough breakdown and analysis of the article, which can be accomplished with the use of worknets. A “worknet” builds parallel pathways with four different phases, each of which helps to connect to the article and expand beyond what it simply presented. Thus, giving us the ability to look into the source on a much deeper level, rather than just superficially, while also enlightening the article’s rhetorical situation.

Semantic Phase:

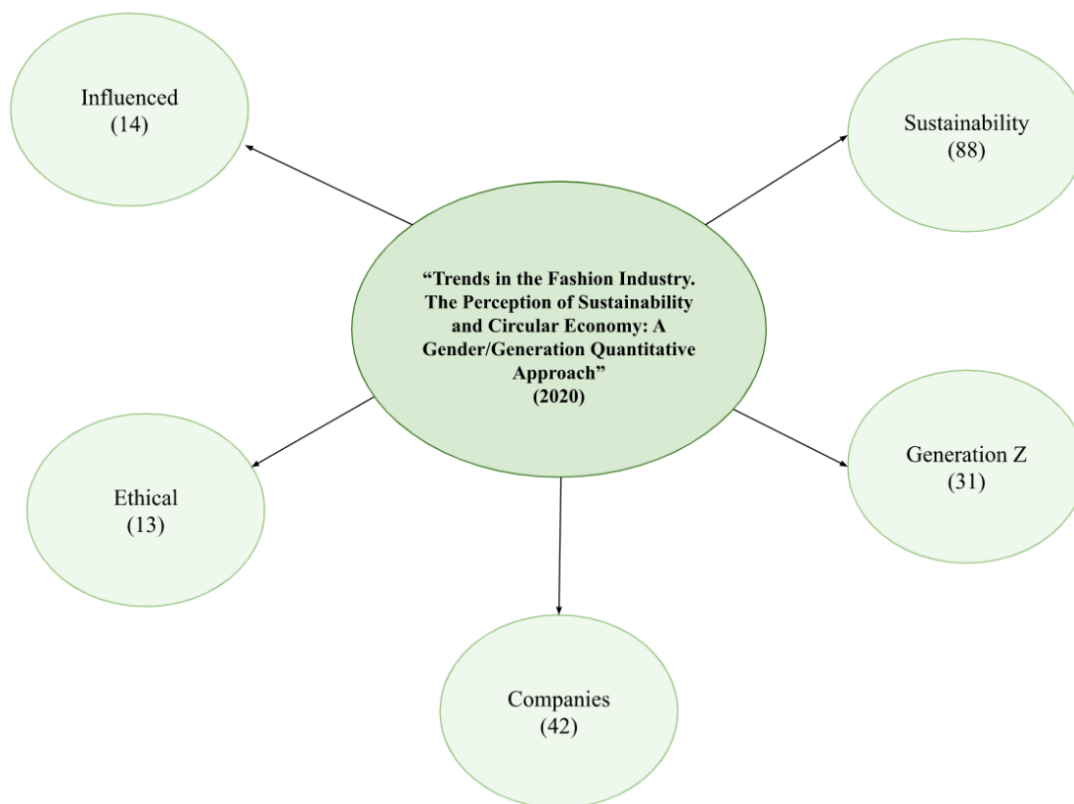


Figure 1: This is a semantic worknet; the five nodes attached each contain a word that stuck out due to its frequency or significance. Underneath the word, in parentheses, is the number of times it appeared within the article.

The first phase of the worknets is the semantic phase; the word “semantic” quite literally means the study of meaning in words. Taking this into account, the phase centers on the keywords or keyphrases that have been frequently repeated or are central to the text. The first word that appeared the most, without a doubt, was “sustainability”. Showing up a total number of 88 times, “sustainability” is the capacity to improve the state and availability of desirable materials or conditions over a long period of time. In the article’s context, the word was put to strong use in order to emphasize a more environmentally conscious approach to the fashion market's business practices as well as how it can further help combat issues not just in the industry, but around the world too. In other words, “sustainability” essentially empowered the argument relating to its importance as it was utilized not just solely in the sense of business, but also in a bigger perspective.

Secondly, “Generation Z” was a phrase that was shown frequently as well. Although it was used often, the main reason I had picked it was actually because of my connection to the phrase. The meaning of the term “generation” refers to all the people born around the same time; for me, being born in 2004 makes me a part of Generation Z. Within the article, the phrase stated the fact as to how younger generations, like Gen Z, are paying attention to sustainability. Therefore, this is holding companies accountable and responsible for their production practices. It further connects to the focal article as data shown through survey research reveals how Gen Z’s awareness of sustainability is a new driver in their purchasing decisions, which causes fashion brands to adopt better practices if they want to attract these customers. As someone who is a part of this younger generation, it is inspiring to see how my generation is making an impact in advocating for better and more sustainable practices in the fashion industry. I, myself, try to do my part by shopping secondhand and recycling old clothes.

Moreover, the word “companies” appeared over 40 times. This is mostly because the article covers largely upon fashion companies’ business strategies and models in the industry. Fashion companies have their main focus on producing and selling goods or services in order to make a profit, but being in the competitive climate that they are in, as mentioned earlier, many work to set themselves apart from other brands. This is important because those who are willing to listen to what consumers want and meet those demands— are more likely to prevail and experience long-term success. Another key term that emerged repeatedly was “influenced”; this word signifies the power to have an effect on someone or something. With that being said, when you’re influenced by something or someone, this often leads to action occurring. Once influenced, it can prove to be very impactful as it can be a catalyst for great change.

An example of this would be seeing how a linear economy, which is the current economy that we are in, is damaging our earth because it uses raw materials to make products, only for them to be disposed of later on. Whereas, a circular economy aims for sustainability and elimination of waste; those who are shown the difference may be *influenced* to support a circular economy, as opposed to the traditional linear economy. Lastly, I had chosen the term “ethical”. This word stresses how sustainable practices are needed but they must be accomplished in an ethical manner. While that may seem self-explanatory, it is primarily to state how companies should not try to find loopholes when they say they want to be more sustainable because if they are approaching it in a morally wrong way, then it would defeat the whole purpose.

Bibliographic Phase:

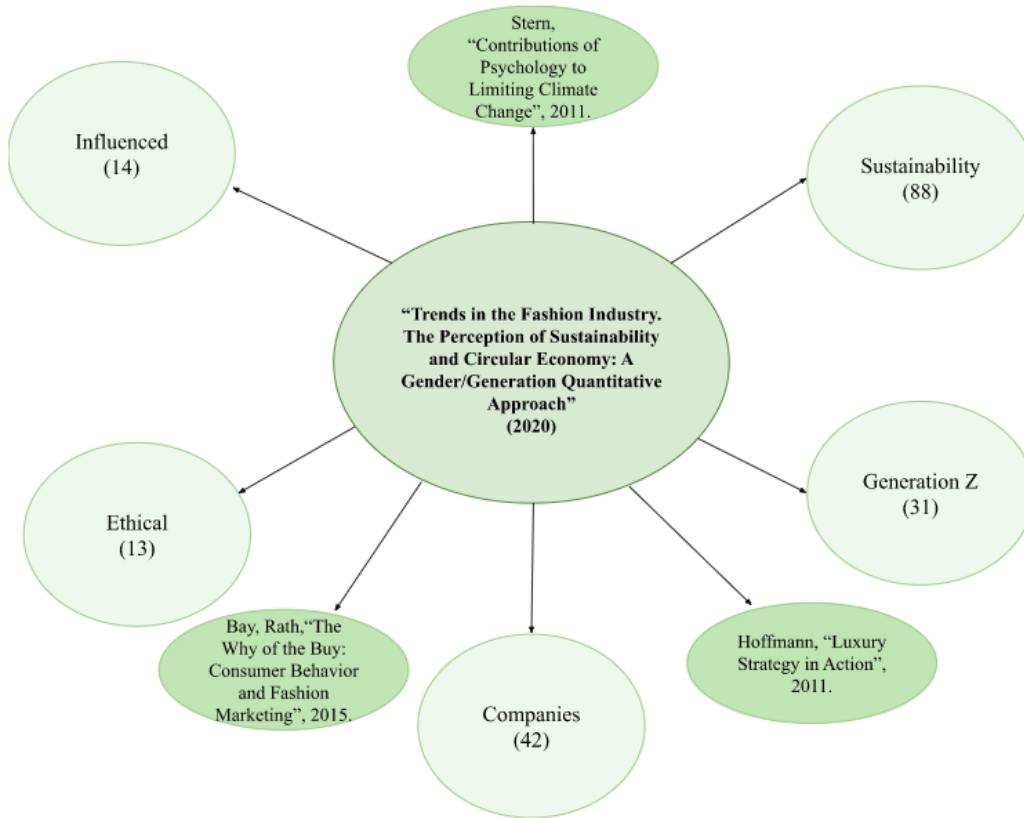


Figure 2: This is a bibliographic worknet; the bibliographic nodes are in lime-green and are now added with the semantic nodes. Inside the bibliographic nodes are cited sources that were used to write/further backup points within the article.

It is vital to acknowledge the sources in which the article uses, whether it was paraphrased, summarized, or quoted, this phase allows us to go deeper into the information that was presented. My first source was a journal published in 2011, titled “Contributions of Psychology to Limiting Climate Change” by Paul C. Stern, and it was incorporated through paraphrasing. The journal was referenced to draw awareness around the fact that when fashion brands listen to what consumers are asking for, then they are much more likely to return to the brand. The authors tie this to the article’s purpose by showcasing that customers are paying

attention to social and environmental issues when it comes to their shopping, so when brands aren't listening and making changes to more environmentally friendly practices, then customers will avoid them the majority of the time because it doesn't align with their principles. I believe this further displays exigence because it speaks on the issue surrounding the lack of awareness of sustainability from companies. Hence, forming a sense of urgency that puts pressure on fashion companies to execute greener practices, or else it might ultimately harm them in the long run regarding loss of profit and customers.

The second source was a book called "Luxury Strategy in Action" by Jonas Hoffmann; it was also written in 2011 and integrated into the article by paraphrasing. The book was utilized to exhibit evidence of how the best-performing companies are the ones that are flexible and capable of rebuilding business strategies and models to fit the current trends. This adds to the article's argument because it draws attention to why companies should be incorporating more sustainable practices in their business models as it is a current trend that is projected to persist in the coming years. Additionally, I think this source brought forth kairos because it presents the argument at a time when the topic, which is sustainability, is very popular at the moment. As a result, this information expresses great timeliness on the authors' part since it calls forth a greater audience seeing as more people would be willing to listen due to when the article was issued.

Finally, the third source that I chose was "The Why of the Buy: Consumer Behavior and Fashion Marketing" by Stefani Bay and Patricia Rath. This book was another reference that was paraphrased within the article to state the changes in which fashion firms must accommodate to. The authors apply this to input how consumer behavior and decision-making are factors that are constantly changing. Therefore, brands must be able to adapt their market to fit their desires. This reinforces the overall purpose as it connects to how trends like sustainability must be

listened to by companies if that is what consumers are looking for. I also believe that this creates a prominent connection between the audience because if you are reading this from a consumer perspective, you might be able to relate to it more since it includes information from those who may share similar viewpoints to yours. Furthermore, this links to logos because the source was used in a way that stated the matter as a fact, which builds on the reasoning for the adaptability of sustainable practices surrounding the fashion market.

Affinity Phase:

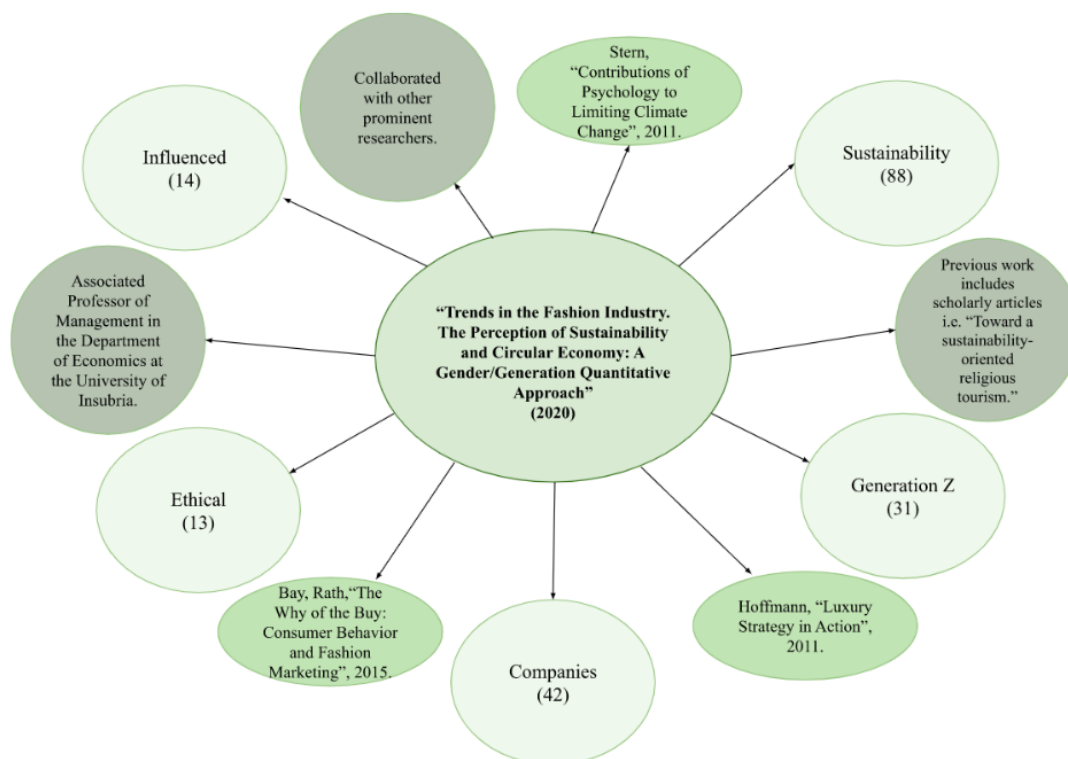


Figure 3: This is an affinity worknet; in the darker green color, three affinity nodes are extended from the center to reflect previous work, affiliations, and background information connected to the author.

While the semantic and bibliographic phases concentrate on the text itself, the affinity phase fosters a broader connection between the text. This phase revolves around the authors themselves by reflecting on their collaborations, background, and/or other pieces of work that they have accomplished in the past. These affinities are particularly noteworthy as they then help to complement or add perspective to the issues of the focal article.

For my article, there were four authors in total, but I decided to focus on one specific author—Patrizia Gazzola. Gazzola first establishes her personal credentials as an Associated Professor of Management in the Department of Economics at the University of Insubria. With her position, this ties into the various economic research papers that she has written; one of which was titled “Toward a Sustainability-Oriented Religious Tourism”. This was an article published to present a study on the role of religious touristic routes and the opportunity to drive a pathway for sustainable tourism. Another one of her previous works includes, “Consumer Empowerment in the Digital Economy: Availing Sustainable Purchasing Decisions” which was published back in 2017. These other published pieces of writing represent how she has always had an interest in the topic of sustainability and has demonstrated plenty of previous work and research around it, thus building her credibility.

She further forms ethos through the collaborations she has done with other prominent researchers when working on these papers. An example would be Roberta Pezzetti, who is also one of the authors who helped write this article. Nonetheless, Pezzetti is a colleague of Gazzola’s and has worked with her numerous times to create other academic reports. Overall, Gazzola’s professional background and previous projects serve as great significance because it allows her to be able to apply more knowledge and information to the making of this certain article. On top of that, it presents her qualifications to be speaking on the subject of sustainability.

Choric Phase:

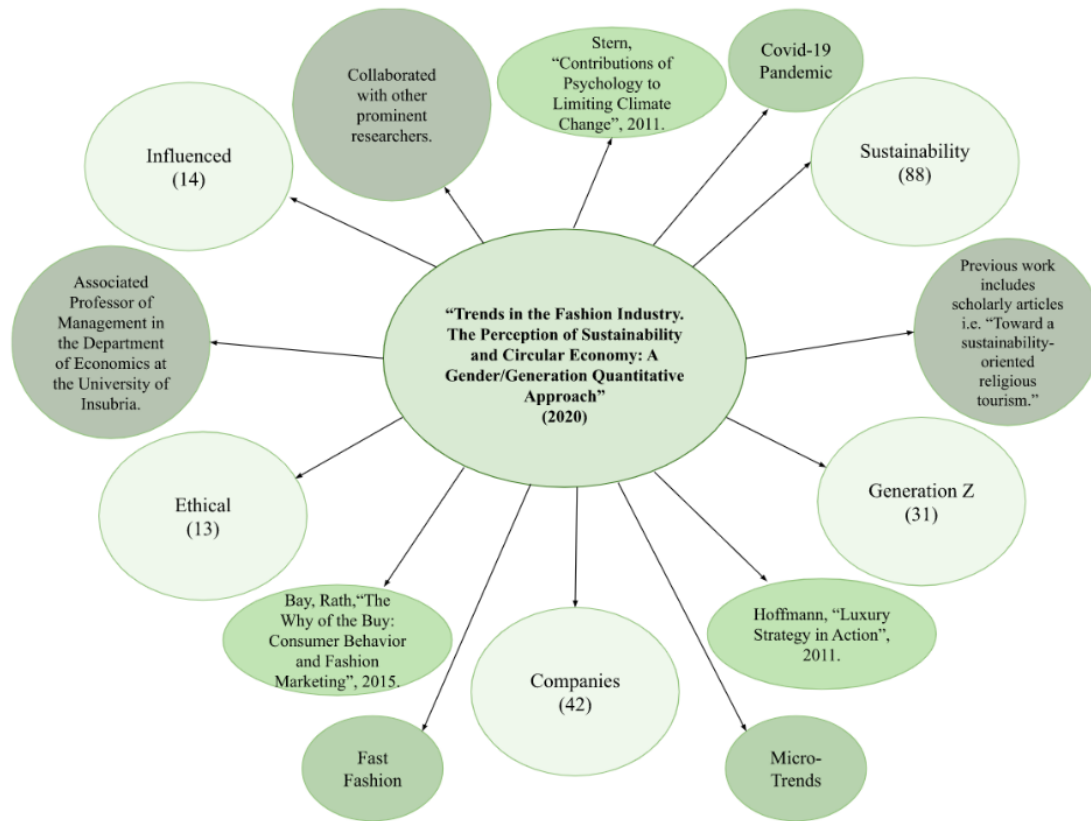


Figure 4: This is a choric worknet; the choric nodes are in the sage green color and demonstrate events or happenings that were occurring during the time that the article was published. These events help to expand the cultural context.

The final phase is the choric phase; this phase highlights the time and place in which the article was published by gathering news and happenings that coincided during it. My article was released in April 2020, which at the time was when the Covid-19 pandemic was very prevalent. Covid-19 was a contagious disease that was spreading around the world. This resulted in the majority of the nation being stuck in lockdown in order to diminish the number of growing cases. However, with everyone being at home, more and more people were on social media platforms.

This ultimately led to individuals gaining exposure and awareness to the fashion industry's outdated business models. People began to pay attention to the horrible practices that these companies participated in and strongly advocated for change. This illustrates a profound degree of exigence as the concern revolving around these practices prompted the authors to speak for more ethical approaches.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic directly correlates to the fast fashion phenomenon as well. During such dire times, not everyone had the ability to afford sustainable clothing because they tend to be more expensive. Consequently, it forced many people to look for cheaper clothes, and oftentimes, this resulted in them purchasing from fast fashion retailers. Participation in fast fashion grew immensely, but this was alarming as it has both a massive social and environmental impact. Not only does it cause extensive damage to the planet due to garments being mass-produced, but it is known to exploit workers through unethical labor practices too. With this becoming a growing issue, it can explain the timeliness of the authors' argument.

In addition, another notable happening was micro-trends. A "micro-trend" is a trend that rises to popularity quicker and then leaves the trend cycle faster. Subsequently, this fuels a faster fashion cycle, thus prompting greater waste to be produced. Consumers end up buying more pieces to keep up with the trends, only to wear them for a short period of time. This is troubling because it promotes the overconsumption of clothing, while also amplifying the tremendous production of waste perpetuated by micro-trends. As micro-trends prove to be a rising problem, the article helps to convey a strong sense of kairos since it draws attention to working towards a greener, more sustainable path during a time when it seems to lack it.

In conclusion, the work of Patrizia Gazzola, Enrica Pavione, Roberta Pezzetti, and Daniele Grechi encapsulates the growing trend of sustainability and its succeeding influence on

the fashion industry. Their research proposes hope for an increase in better ethical approaches from businesses and the adoption of greater sustainable strategies. The intended audience of this article would primarily be market researchers of fashion brands and companies. However, it could be said that the secondary audience would be environmentally-conscious theorists and economists. Furthermore, the authors create pathos by bringing acknowledgment to the grave danger that is bound to occur if steps toward sustainability aren't taken. Ethos is also established through the professional work experience and background of these authors, which provides them the credibility to conduct research and compose the article in the first place. Meanwhile, logos is built from the accumulation of facts and studies presented throughout the paper. On the other hand, as the choric phase has shown, the timing in which this article was published demonstrates an awareness of kairos considering the ongoing events during the period. Overall, the use of worknets gives us the opportunity to gain an in-depth analysis of the article, both visually and textually, thus allowing us to use the source to grasp a more profound understanding and deconstruct the rhetorical situation.