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BRAND AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOUR OF GEN Z TOWARDS FAST FASHION BRANDS
A Z GENERÁCIÓ FAST FASHION MÁRKÁKKAL SZEMBENI MÁRKAELKERÜLÉSI MAGATARTÁSÁNAK VIZSGÁLATA

Most research into consumer behaviour and branding focuses on the reasons why people choose certain products and brands. Research related to anti-consumption emphasises the opposite: its aim is to explore reasons behind the rejection of different products, brands, or even consumption as such. Relevance of this issue is not negligible: knowing what consumers do not want (and why) is at least as important as knowing what they do want (and why). Survey results, related to the five categories of brand avoidance – experience avoidance, identity avoidance, moral avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and advertising – provide the input for the methodology of multidimensional scaling, aiming to identify sets of variables which are commonly responsible for brand avoidance. The of the research lies in its scope including all five categories of brand avoidance, which have not been tested in this comprehensive way in the fast fashion apparel industry before. The use of multidimensional scaling for analysing the aspects of brand avoidance is also unique. Its main added value is to provide an explainable picture of variables which "stand together" in shaping brand avoidance behaviour related to fast fashion. In addition, the clustering of respondents sheds light on the dominant features of those variables, in case of the brand avoidance behaviour of Gen Z.

Keywords: **anti-consumption, brand avoidance, Fast fashion, generation Z, multidimensional scaling, MDS**

A fogyasztói magatartással és márkázással kapcsolatos kutatások többsége a termék- és márkaválasztás okainak feltárására fókuszál. A fogyasztásellenes magatartásra irányuló kutatások ennek ellenkezőjét hangúlyozzák; céljuk a termék, a márka, illetve maga a fogyasztás elutasításának hátterében húzódó okok azonosítása. A téma relevanciája nem elhanyagolható: legalább annyira fontos tudni, mit és miért nem választanak a fogyasztók, mint azt, mely termékeket és márkákat preferálják. A kutatás a Z generáció márkaelkerülési magatartását vizsgálja az irodalomban azonosított öt márkaelkerülési kategória – a tapasztalati, az identitáshoz köthető, a morális, a hiány értékű és a reklámmal kapcsolatos márkaelkerülés – mentén, kérdőíves felmérés alapján. A kutatás három vonatkozásban nyújt hozzáadott értéket: felfedi azokat a változócsoportokat, melyek együttesen befolyásolják a márkaelkerülési magatartást; az eddigi kutatásokon túllépve valamennyi márkaelkerülési kategóriát megvizsgálja a fast fashion márkák esetében; valamint az adatokat a multidimenzionális skálázás módszerével elemzi, amelyet a márkaelkerülési szakirodalom eddig nem alkalmazott. A megkérdezettek klaszterekbe való besorolása rávilágít arra is, mely márkaelkerülési változók dominálnak klaszterenként a Z generáció márkaelkerülési magatartásában.

Kulcsszavak: **fogyasztás-ellenesség, márkaelkerülés, fast fashion, Z generáció, multidimenzionális skálázás, MDS**

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According to Lee and Fernandez (2009), consumption related research mainly observes consumer behaviour and attitudes, often focusing on the reasons why consumers buy certain products and brands. A crucial reason behind purchasing a product is the sum of benefits provided by the brand (Lee et al., 2009b; Olins, 2009, cited by Budac & Baltador, 2013, p. 444; Wernerfelt, 1984; Bauer & Kolos, 2016; Lee et al., 2012; Keller, 2013) which reflects a clearly positive viewpoint related to the consuming of brands (see also Rindell et al., 2014). However, due to the controversial impacts of consumer society, beyond knowing what consumers want, getting to know what they do not want has gained noticeable interest recently. This area is not only interesting, but also very diversified, which resulted in the emergence of different approaches, such as alternative consumption, prosocial and pro-environmental consumption, or even anti-consumption. Research into the latter approach is spreading (Englis & Soloman, 1995; Banister & Hogg, 2004; Lee et al., 2009a; Knittel et al., 2016). Due to the fact, that the boundaries of these approaches are not clear, all of them will be touched upon briefly, however our paper follows the latest trend by dealing with anti-consumption. Anti-consumption is also a complex area, considering the object and the reasons behind of this phenomenon. Our paper focuses on brand avoidance as a special form of anti-consumption, via summarizing the relevant literature and testing the model of Lee et al. (2009a), extended by Knittel et al. (2016), on consumers of generation Z, related to the fast fashion apparel industry. A questionnare-based survey is testing the five categories of brand avoidance: experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, moral avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and advertising avoidance.

Lee et al. (2009b) suggest a model which is aimed to be reliably tested on an identifiable target group where brand avoidance behaviour appears in an expressed form. Previous research, carried out in the apparel industry often did not meet this precondition, making survey results highly ambiguous. Our survey was clearly conducted at a sample from the target group as 81% of the surveyed 501 university students reported to regularly buy fast fashion apparel products. The precondition for using the theoretical model of Lee et al. (2009b) has also been met, since the remaining 19% of respondents have expressed strong brand avoidance behaviour, buying fast fashion apparel products never or very rarely, although they are members of the target group.

In the empirical analysis, we have used the methodology of multidimensional scaling (MDS) to identify sets of variables which are commonly responsible for brand avoidance in the fast fashion apparel industry. The 8 sensitivity-related aspects illustrate the sources of brand avoidance in a complex way, indicating the interconnectedness of included variables in the actual brand avoidance behaviour of the sample. Respondents have been classified by a cluster analysis, along the variables of the initial model and the 8 sensitivity aspects. Clusters represent strongly committed and weakly committed brand avoiders, as well as a group of respondents who mainly aim to protect their identity with brand avoidance.

Final results are expected to be useful for both slow fashion companies to strengthen their sustainability strategy and brand value, as well as for fast fashion companies to fight brand avoidance behaviour in the future.

Literature review of brand avoidance

The importance of branding and its link to brand avoidance

Branding incudes functions and benefits both for the company and the consumers. From corporate perspective, the brand can function as a *resource of the company* (Olins, 2009 cited by Budac & Baltador, 2013, p. 444; Wernerfelt, 1984), it ensures *functional benefits* like higher price and *emotional benefits* like consumer and investor trust (Bauer & Kolos, 2016). The brand also ensures the *differentiation* between brands; in this manner a well-known brand can be a source of competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2012). Last but not least, a strong brand assures several *marketing advantages* such as higher loyalty and higher price margin (Keller, 2013).

From consumer perspective, a central issue of consumer behaviour research is to understand the role of branding in consumers' decision-making process and the benefits brands provide to consumers. Kapferer (2008) has identified 8 functions of the brand, which ensure benefits for consumers. These are identification, practicality, guarantee, otimisation, badge, continuity, hedonistic and ethical functions (Kapferer, 2008, p. 22). Two of these functions need to be highlighted in connection with brand avoidance. The brand can be considered as a symbolic entity, which is related to customers (Prónay, 2016, p. 32). The brand as a *symbol* strengthens the self-image of the consumer or the image that a person presents to others. The *ethical function* means the satisfaction linked to the responsible behaviour of the brand and its relationship to the society. The negative perception associated with those functions or the lack of them may lead to brand avoidance (Kapferer, 2008).

Anti-consumption and brand avoidance

Beyond positive effects, the spread of consumer society has also resulted in some conspicuous negative impacts, related mainly to environmental and social issues – like overconsumption (mainly as a result of excessive production and the creation of mass markets, together with the ideology of more consumption representing higher value and satisfaction), overuse of natural resources, environmental degradation, inequalities, exploitation of labour etc. As a reaction to this phenomena, several consumers started to reduce their consumption and the topic of anti-consumption has become a preferred research area. Iyer and Muncy (2009) argue that anti-consumption movements appear in societies, where mass consumption is present (p. 160). Gabriel and Lang (2008) highlight anti-consumption in connection with the changing nature of consumption, as a message of the anti-globalization movement. Zavestoski (2002, p. 121) defines

it as "resistance to, distance of, or even resentment of consumption".

Close and Zinkhan (2009) argue that alternative consumption and anti-consumption have long traditions in the American society, originating from the 17th century. They define anti-consumption as resistance towards consumption of certain products and services while alternative consumption refers to the refusal of purchasing traditional products via traditional channels (Gould et al., 2007, cited by Close & Zinkhan, 2009, p. 200).

Lee and Fernandez (2009) also argue that *anti-consumption* is not equal to alternative, conscientious or green (sustainable) consumption. The latter are regarded as types of *prosocial consumption.* Although some consumers tend to express their anti-consumption attitudes via non-conform or specific lifestyle choice (like purchasing environmentally friendly products), anti-consumption primarily focuses on the reasons against consumption. Black and Cherrier (2010) do not make such distinction; they consider anti-consumption as part of a sustainable lifestyle, because environmental concerns are often strongly related to anti-consumption. In addition to environmental concerns, self-interest and subjective well-being, as well as political and personal concerns have also been found to be frequent motivations behind sustainable lifestyles (Iyer & Muncy, 2009, p. 160).

Iyer and Muncy (2009) classify *anti-consumers* into four groups, as illustrated in Table 1. In line with the statement of Craig & Lees (2006, cited by Iyer & Muncy, 2009, p. 160), the object of anti-consumption can be consumption in general; the consumption of certain brands and products. Reasons behind anti-consumption behaviour can be social concerns or personal concerns.

Table 1.

Types of anti-consumers

Object of anti-consumption		Reason behind anti-consumption	
		Social concerns	Personal concerns
	General	Global impact consumers	Simplifiers
	Specific	Market activists *brand avoiders*	Anti-loyal consumers *brand avoiders*

Source: based on Iyer & Muncy (2009, p. 161) and Lee et al. (2009a)

Global impact consumers aim to reduce their general consumption for the sake of the society and the planet. The group of simplifiers (in line with Zavestoski, 2002) represent simpler lifestyle, oriented to less consumption. According to Cherrier et al. (2011), voluntary simplifiers use anti-consumption in relation to their personal reflection, individual fulfillment and desired self (p. 1758). Market activists tend to avoid several products and brands, because those create special social and environmental problems. Anti-loyal consumers can be defined as an opposite of loyal consumers (Iyes & Muncy, 2009).

According to Aksoy et al. (2013), loyal consumers create value for companies through repurchasing and positive word of mouth, while anti-loyalty is regarded to "reflect personal commitment to avoid purchasing a product because of perceived inferiority or because of a negative experience associated with it" (Lee et al. 2009a, cited by Iyes & Muncy, 2009, p. 162).

The phrase of *brand avoidance* emerges in several studies (see Oliva et al., 1992; Thompson et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2009b etc.), with different approach. Lee et al. (2009b, p. 422) define *brand avoidance* as a special form of anti-consumption where consumers intentionally decide to avoid certain brands, although they have access to the product, they could afford it financially, and they have the ability to purchase it. It means an active rejection of the brand (Lee et al., 2009a). If the reason behind not choosing a brand is high price, unavailability or non-accessibility of the brand, it cannot be considered as active rejection and hence, as brand avoidance. Based on the two approaches (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009b), market activists and anti-loyal consumers can be regarded as brand avoiders (see Table 1.).

Unlike the above authors, Hogg and Banister (2001) identify two reasons behind product avoidance or brand avoidance: lack of affordability and the refusal of buying the product. Tamasits & Prónay (2017, based on Fetcherin & Heinrich, 2014) explain brand avoidance as a relationship between the brand and the consumers, based on its strenght and direction of emotion. If the brand relationship is weak and the consumer's emotions to the brand are negative, brand avoidance is evolving.

This paper uses the definition of Lee et al. (2009a), which excludes situations from brand avoidance, where the consumer is not able to buy the product, due to any reasons.

Main types of brand avoidance

As seen from the definitions, Lee et al. (2009b) consider brand as a multidimensional constellation, implying several reasons to exist behind avoiding brands. The comprehensive model of Lee et al. includes four types of brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009b) which provided a theoretical background for a few empirical research since then (e.g. Knittel et al., 2016; Rindell et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2013).

Experiential avoidance originates from brand promise, which is an important aspect of a brand's constellation of values, as emphasised by several authors (Lee et al., 2009b; Kapferer, 2008; Bauer & Kolos, 2016; Majerova & Kliestik, 2015). Majerova and Kliestik (2015) consider brand promise as a rational component, expressing what the brand provides to the consumer. Individual expectations derive from those promises and if the company is not able to meet the expectations, it may lead to disappointment and result in brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009b).

Tamasits and Prónay (2018) argue that the effect of self-image on consumption originates in self-esteem and self-consistency, which are deeply discussed in the research of Sirgy (1982), who states that individuals try

to act in accordance with their view of themselves (self-consistency) and are looking for those experiences which strengthen their self-concept (self-esteem). *Identity avoidance* occurs when consumers perceive certain brands to be inauthentic, or when the brand is connected to a negatively judged reference group which they do not want to belong to (Lee et al., 2009b; Englis & Soloman, 1995; Hogg & Banister, 2001).

The next category of brand avoidance is strongly connected to green or eco-friendly thinking and supports the growing importance of social sensitivity (Törőcsik, 2016). Unlike the other three types which express how brand promise directly influences well-being of the individual, *moral avoidance* relates to the wider society (Lee et al., 2009b). For certain consumers, brand promise is not compatible with their reported moral values, consequently, the brand is avoided because of ethical reasons. Based on consumers' motivations and attitudes, Dudás (2011, p. 48) describes this type of conscious consumer choice as consciousness which takes into account the interests of other people.

Deficit-value avoidance mainly occurs when consumers associate the low price of the product with low quality. In addition to budget brands, deficit-value avoidance may also emerge in case of premium brands which are considered to be unable to provide adequate value for consumers for the higher price.

Knittel et al. (2016) used the model of Lee et al. (2009b) in their research on generation Y and explored a further category of *brand avoidance* which is *related to advertisement*. They found that content, celebrity endorser, music and consumers' response to the advertisement also can lead to brand avoidance. They have extended the model of Lee et al. (2009b) a posteriori with this fifth category of brand avoidance.

Lee et al. (2009b) considered their own extended model to be rather general. Due to this limitation, they suggest to test the model on the target group of a specific brand, where brand avoidance can be detected within the target group. Knittel et al. (2016) analysed generation Y, albeit their research was not interpreted for a specific industry. Kim et al. (2013) carried out their research in the fashion industry, where they used the model of Lee et al. (2009b), but without testing the advertisement related brand avoidance elements of Knittel et al. (2016).

Based on the above theories and results, our research aims to make a comprehensive evaluation of brand avoidance types, using the extended brand avoidance model (see Knittel et al., 2016), in the fashion industry, related to fast fashion brands, on a specific target group of those brands.

Designing the empirical research into brand avoidance

Selection of the industry for testing the model

As a result of the fast industrialization and economic boom in the 19th century, clothing industry has changed. The spread of sewing machines and patterns established the ready-for-wear industry and also resulted in the spread of mass production. As a consequence of mass production, fashion items have become widely accessible for the society and since the 1990s, brands like Zara, H&M or Top Shop have gained strong market position globally as well as in Hungary (Okonkwo, 2007; Marketline, 2015a, 2015b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2013). These brands are defined in the literature as fast fashion brands, however, researchers define fast fashion in different ways. Kim et al. (2013) and Taplin (2014) interpret the phrase as a business model: Fast fashion is the most well-known business model in the fashion industry due to its supply chain management, merchandising techniques, and retail technology (Kim et al., p. 243). According to Choi et al. (2010) "fast fashion is the strategy that retailers adopt in order to reflect current and emerging trends quickly and effectively in current merchandise assortments" (p. 473). Runfola and Guercini (2013), Joung (2014), as well as Zarley Watson and Yan (2013) similarly approach the phrase from a strategic point of view, while Sull and Turconi (2008) also add that fast fashion democratizes the couture by producing available and affordable items for masses (p. 5).

Hu & Shiau (2015) adopt the definition of Byun and Sternquist (2008): fast fashion – named after the fast food conception – means quickly updated products with short renewal cycle and speedy delivery. The approach of Lang et al. (2013) is more critical: based on product characteristics, fast fashion means that retailers produce items of weaker quality and shorter durability (p.707). Abeles (2014, p. 157) calls "fast fashion, where clothing, particularly for women, changes rapidly and marketing efforts attempt to compel consumption based on dynamic trends". According to Pookulangara and Shephard (2013), based on the definition of Wood (2009), Carey and Cervellon (2014), Miller (2012) and Cortez et al. (2014), fast fashion is a cheaper version of the styles appearing on the catwalks of Milan and Paris.

In our empirical research all above explained features of fast fashion will be used.

Selection of respondents from the target group of fast fashion brands

As fast fashion industry provides mass production, fast fashion brands have a wide range of targeted consumer segments within the society. Our empirical research focuses on the brand avoidance behaviour of one segment, generation Z. Following the typology of McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010), we characterize this generation based on sociological considerations. In the research of the Ernst and Young LLP (2015), members of Gen Z are described as highly educated, technologically savvy, naturally creative, innovative individuals and was born after 1994 (p. 10). According to Priporas et al. (2017), this generation will be a challenge in the future for marketing and retail, because as consumers they are supposed to behave differently and the are found to be more open for innovative products. In addition, Generation Z is regarded as the most environmentally conscious generation (Tari, 2011). Nógrádi-Szabó and Neulinger (2017) analyzed

Gen Z from the perspective of their values and lifestyle. Although their sample was limited on the young population of Budapest, research results significantly contributed to the understanding of Gen Z's attitudes towards brands and clothing. This generation in the capital city was found to pay extraordinary attention to mobile communication and clothing. The Williams and Page (2011) supports those results, describing the members of GenZ as individuals who think twice what they are going to wear, considering fashion and clothing as a key tool for acceptance by peers and inclusion. Research results confirm the eligibility of analyzing fast fashion brand avoidance on a sample of Gen Z. Contrary to previous generations, Generation Z has a different attitude towards brands. In some cases owning an item is more important for them than owning the brand of that item (Nógrádi-Szabó & Neulinger, 2017). Based on these patterns, exploring the behaviour of Generation Z is expected to result in new insights into brand avoidance.

Sampling methodology and sample characteristics

Data collection was conducted via a web-based online survey, asking 516 students of Corvinus University of Budapest, from April to May 2017. First part of the questionnaire asked respondents from Gen Z about their opinion, related to fast fashion brands in general, while the second part focused specifically on brand avoidance behaviour of respondents who rarely or never buy fast fashion products. This paper introduces the results into brand avoidance. First, non-relevant respondents were excluded who exclusively purchase clothing through online channels, making store related questions irrelevant. Hence, the final sample counted 501 students. In order to avoid the difficulty to identify the target group (as often mentioned in literature, e.g. Zarley, Waston, & Yan, 2013; Joung, 2014; Lang et al., 2013; Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Kim et al., 2013; Choi et al., 2010; Caro & Martinez de Albeníz, 2014; Gabrielli et al., 2013), respondents were directly asked which fast fashion brands they know and how often the buy from them. All respondents were able to name the most important fast fashion brands. 81% regularly buy their products, while the remaining 19% very rarely do so. That 19% (N=92) was the basis for us to test brand avoidance. Completely avoiding the purchase of fast fashion products seemed to be challenging for participants of the research. Reasons behind root partly in demographic features of the sample (see Table 2.) as well as in discomfort and inconvenience of changing to alternative ways of purchasing clothes in the market (e.g. to select clothes in second-hand stores which may be time-consuming and less efficient), which can be a barrier.

The sample is not representative related to habitation: majority of the respondents live in the capital city or in towns and has a better access to products of fast fashion brands. In smaller settlements, second hand shops and shops supplying non-branded mass-products are usually available. Second hand shops often provide more durable clothes of luxury brabds as well, not only fast-fashion or non-branded mass products. From sustainability point of view, buying products in second hand shops is a better choice than buying products in fast fashion stores, considering the stages of the textile product life-cycle These facts are relevant in the case of moral avoidance.

Table 2.
Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographics		N=92
Gender	Male	44 (48%)
	Female	48 (52%)
Habitation	Capital city	42 (46%)
	Town	38 (41%)
	Village	12 (13%)
Disposable net income/month/ person	0-20.000 HUF	15 (16%)
	21.000-40.000 HUF	19 (21%)
	41.000-60.000 HUF	24 (26%)
	61.000-80.000 HUF	8 (9%)
	81.000-100.000 HUF	9 (10%)
	101.000-120.000 HUF	5 (5%)
	121.000-140.000 HUF	1 (1%)
	Above 141.000 HUF	11 (12%)

Source: own compilation

Disposable net income of respondents has positive skewness (the value of the skewness is 0.854), therefore they cannot afford complete brand avoidance in its strict meaning. There were only 9 respondents who reported to never buy fast fashion products.

Research results

Behaviour patterns of brand avoiders

Based on previous research results (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b; Kim et al., 2013; Knittel et al., 2016), a total of 29 variables have been identified for the 5 main brand avoidance categories. Mean values for all variables are illustrated by Figure 1. and Figure 2., related to each category.

Figure 1. incudes the categories of experiential, identity, moral and deficit value avoidance for all brand avoiders (N=92). Validity and reliability of these categories was tested previously by Kim et al. (2013).

The strength of main brand avoidance categories in brand avoidance behaviour of the sample can be explained through the total average scores for each category. *Moral brand avoidance* variables received the *highest* average score (3.19), exerting the strongest influence on brand avoidance behaviour of respective respondents. Within this category, contribution of fast fashion companies to overconsumption seems to bother respondents most (3.4).

Within the category of *identity avoidance*, average responses to variables express a range of "slight" to "strong" (but not "very strong") influence on respondents' brand avoidance. Difference between the highest and the lowest average score is significant. The most influential patterns affecting brand avoidance behaviour of

Figure 1.

Mean values to the question: "How do the following statements – related to fast fashion brands – affect your brand avoidance behaviour?" (1= not at all, 5=very strongly) N=92
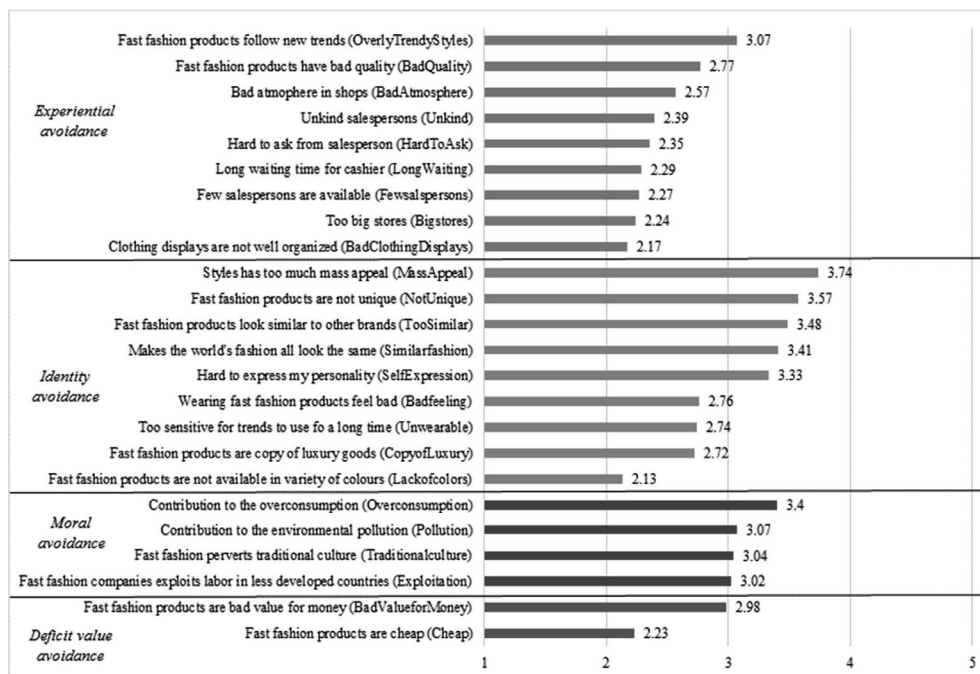
Source: own compilation

respondents are mass appeal, not unique feature and same or similar look of fast fashion products, followed by the concern that it is hard to express one's personality through those products (3.33).

Within *deficit value avoidance*, the aspect of bad value for money seemed to have higher distracting power from purchase than low price.

Experiential avoidance variables – including store-related features, personnel and product quality – are reported to have the *lowest* influence on brand avoidance behaviour in the sample (average score was 2.49). The low average value of experiential avoidance can be explained by the research results of Gabrielli et al. (2013) who identified the motivational factors behind buying fast fashion products. Main reasons appeared to be trying something different from the usual style and refreshing the wardrobe. In both cases, expectations towards fast fashion products proved to be low, decreasing the probability of experiential brand avoidance. Further explanation may stem from the value proposition of fast fashion which is fashionable clothing at accessible price (Caro & Martinez de Albéniz, 2014). As price is often regarded as an indicator of quality (Hofmeister-Tóth, 2006, p.173), lower price may lead to lower quality expectations, which can also decrease the probability of experiential brand avoidance.

Advertising related brand avoidance (see Figure 2.) was tested after a control question which asked whether the respondent has ever seen any kind of fast fashion brand advertising which resulted in a lower number of respondents (N=72). Since reliability for advertising related statements has not been tested before, the value of Cronbach alpha had to be calculated in this research (as suggested by

Füstös, 2009). According to the results, α=0.811, which is in the recommended interval of reliability from 0.7 to 0.9 (Nunnally (1978), cited by Panayides, 2013). Deleting any of the variables did not result in higher Cronbach alpha value.

Figure 2.

Mean values to the question:"How do the following statements – related to fast fashion advertising – affect your brand avoidance behaviour?" (1= not at all, 5=very strongly) N=72
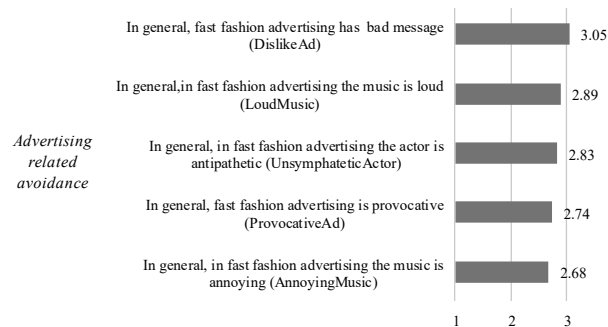
Source: own compilation

Based on the results of Knittel et al. (2016), respondents who met fast fashion related advertising (N=72) were asked about their opinions. As in case of Knittel et al.'s (2016) research for Gen Y, we found similar results for Gen Z, in terms of quite neutral average scores for the advertising related statements which do not differ from each other significantly (see Figure 2.). It means that advertising related features do not heavily influence respondents in their brand avoidance behaviour.

Multidimensional scaling for interpreting brand avoidance variables

Beyond linking brand avoidance variables to the main categories, suggested by the literature, the aim was to further analyse and show graphically how those variables actually build the behaviour of respondents. As the brand avoidance variables did not follow a normal distribution, it was not possible to examine the variables with factor analysis. Hence, we used multidimensional scaling which makes possible to examine the background and hidden structure of the data (Lehota, 2001), by visualising the proximity of variables (their similarity or difference). This method is getting popular in consumer behaviour research (see Laruccia et al., 2011; Mostafa, 2015; Zsóka et al., 2013).

The stress factor for the model, describing the model's goodness of fit, was 0.193. There is no agreement in the literature whether this value is acceptable or poor. According to Kruskal (1964, cited by Cox & Cox, 1992), if the stress factor is below 20%, the goodness of fit is poor, while Lehota (2013) argues, that the values of the stress factor in the interval of 0.1 to 0.2 are acceptable and the results can be interpreted. Results of the multidimensional scaling are illustrated in Figure 3. As a result of the method, 8 groups of brand avoidance variables were identified. Variables within those groups represent specific kinds of sensitivity which have to be considered when assessing brand avoidance behaviour of consumers.

Figure 3.

Result of the multidimensional scaling of all brand avoidance variables
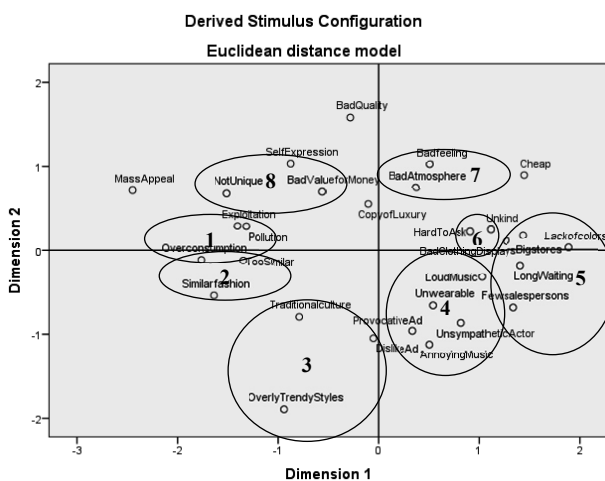
Source: own compilation

Group 1 includes variables of moral brand avoidance, expressing *Sensitivity to social and environmental problems*, including contribution of fast fashion companies to overconsumption, to environmental pollution and the exploitation of less developed countries.

Group 2 reflects *Sensitivity to uniformity*, including two variables connected to identity brand avoidance, expressing that fast fashion products are similar to other brands and fast fashion companies make the world's fashion all look the same.

Group 3 illustrates *Sensitivity to values* (in the form of Conservatism versus modernism), consisting of a moral and experiential brand avoidance variable, expressing that fast fashion companies contribute to the loss of traditional culture and the feature of fast fashion products to follow the latest trends.

Group 4 expresses *Sensitivity to communication and wearability,* including almost all variables related to advertising, plus wearability, meaning that the styles of fast fashion products to be too trendy to use for a long time.

Group 5 reflects *Sensitivity to the store concept*, consisting of experiential brand avoidance variables, related to fast fashion stores and staff as well as one identity brand avoidance variable, which expresses that fast fashion products do not have large variety of colours.

Group 6 expresses *Sensitivity to the attitude of the store personnel,* including two experiential brand avoidance variables – which describe the attitude of the personnel in a negative phrasing.

Group 7 reflects *Sensitivity to personal feelings and store atmosphere*, including an identity and an experiential brand avoidance variable, expressing that respondent does not feel good in fast fashion products and the atmosphere is not good in fast fashion stores.

Group 8 reflects *Sensitivity to connect brand value and the product*, including two identity brand avoidance variables and one deficit-value avoidance variable, expressing that fast fashion products are not unique, they make it hard to express someone's personality and they have bad value for money relation.

It is obvious from the results that the sensitivity related grouping of the multidimensional scaling is not completely identical with the original grouping of variables into brand avoidance categories. The reason behind those results lies in human behaviour patterns. Apparently, the sources of brand avoidance (reflected in the 29 variables) play a multifaceted role in the actual behaviour, their importance and influence on brand avoidance vary from respondent to respondent. Sensitivity related grouping expresses how those variables stand together in the brand avoidance behaviour of the sample.

Cluster analysis of respondents, based on brand avoidance behaviour

Based on brand avoidance variables, a k-means cluster analysis was conducted, in order to classify respondents, according to the main features of their brand avoidance behaviour, during the cluster analysis all the previously introduced variables were used. The appropriate number of clusters was supported by the significance levels in the Anova table, resulting in 3 clusters. Final cluster centers are summarized in Table 3.

Each involved variable was statistically significant at P<0.05, except for the variable 'BadValueForMoney', however it was statistically significant at P <0.1 (0.093). Taking into account the sample size, this value was regarded as acceptable.

In the following, clusters will be described, based on the initial comprehensive model of brand avoidance and the results of MDS analysis. As demographic variables do

not show significant differences in the three clusters, the behaviour of respondents can be exclusively explained by the strength of influence of brand avoidance variables.

Table 3.

Final cluster centers as result of the cluster analysis (highest mean values are in bold)

Final Cluster Centers			
	Cluster		
	1	2	3
Cheap	1.78	2.40	*2.60*
BadQuality	2.33	2.88	*3.44*
BadValueforMoney	2.78	*3.35*	2.92
OverlyTrendyStyles	2.26	3.15	*3.88*
Unwearable	1.93	2.93	*3.52*
Bigstores	1.85	*2.73*	2.00
BadClothingDisplays	1.78	*2.68*	1.76
LongWaiting.	1.78	*2.95*	1.96
BadAtmosphere	2.00	*3.10*	2.52
HardToAsk	1.74	*3.03*	2.20
Unkind	1.67	*2.93*	2.40
Fewsalespersons	1.67	*2.98*	2.00
Lackofcolors	1.70	*2.55*	2.04
SelfExpression	2.37	3.70	*4.00*
Badfeeling	2.11	*3.23*	3.16
NotUnique	2.37	3.85	*4.56*
TooSimilar	2.33	3.85	*428*
CopyofLuxury	1.89	2.95	*3.44*
MassAppeal	2.67	3.95	*4.76*
Overconsumption	2.63	3.73	*3.96*
Pollution	2.41	*3.43*	3.40
Exploitation	2.59	*3.35*	3.16
Similarfashion	2.19	*3.80*	4.36
Traditionalculture	2.07	*3.65*	3.44
DislikeAd	2.35	*3.79*	2.16
ProvocativeAd	2.18	*3.42*	2.28
UnsymphateticActor	1.82	*3.31*	2.30
Annoyingmusic	2.07	*3.29*	2.11
Loudmusic	2.13	*3.55*	2.21

Source: own compilation

Cluster 1: Least committed brand avoiders, 27 members

From Table 3. it is obvious that none of the variables have high average scores in this cluster. The total average score of all variables is 2.28. Most important (even if not too strong) aspects in the brand avoidance of the least committed brand avoider group are bad value for money and the mass appeal of fast fashion products, followed by moral aspects. Least influential aspects are connected to fast fashion stores and to the personnel. Regarding results of the MDS analysis, Cluster 1 does not show strong sensitivity in any categories.

Cluster 2: Most committed brand avoiders, 40 members

As opposed to Cluster 1, the total average scores of all variables is 3.5 in Cluster 2, showing a significantly larger

importance of brand avoidance aspects in fast fashion related behaviour of the 40 cluster members. Two third of variables take their highest average score in this cluster, compared to the other two clusters. While considering most brand avoidance sources as important, identity related statements seemed to be the most relevant features in the brand avoidance behaviour of Cluster 2 (even if they take their highest value in Cluster 3), including the problem styles have too much mass appeal in case of fast fashion products, they are not unique and are too similar to other brands. The group of most committed brand avoiders criticize the message of the advertising and the contribution of fast fashion to overconsumption. Least important aspects are lack of colour availability and the low price of fast fashion products.

Compared to results of the MDS, members of Cluster 2 strongly expressed strong sensitivity related to brand value and product patterns, uniformity, communication and wearability, followed by the sensitivity to social and environmental problems, values, personal feelings and the attitude of the store personnel.

Cluster 3 – Brand avoiders, who most protect their identity, 25 members

The total average scores of all variables is also relatively high in this Cluster (3.22) and 1/3 of variables take their highest value in this group. Variables of identity avoidance are absolutely prevailing: members of Cluster 3 strongly expressed their fear of deindividuation, they criticize fast fashion products for having too much mass appeal, being not unique, making the world's fashion all look the same, being too similar to other brands. This group considers it hard to express personality with fast fashion products. Least important factors in the brand avoidance behaviour of Cluster 3 – similarly to Cluster 1 – are connected to stores and the personnel.

Related to MDS results, members of Cluster 3 expressed strong sensitivity to brand value and product patterns, uniformity, as well as social and environmental problems, followed by sensitivity to values, communication and wearability as well as personal feelings and store atmosphere.

Discussion and Conclusion

The paper aimed to review the literature and report on a survey based empirical research into anti-consumption and brand avoidance, specifically related to fast fashion products and companies. According to the literature, five brand avoidance categories were identified – experiential, identity, moral, deficit-value and advertisement related brand avoidance – which were analysed on a sample from the target group of fast fashion brands, the Generation Z.

The research focused on the analysis of brand avoidance behaviour of respondents, based on the model of Lee et al. (2009a, 2009b), extended by Knittel et al. (2016). The compiled and conducted survey proved to be appropriate to test the model in the target group. However, the research also has limitations. The sample was relatively small, including only 19% of respondents of the total sample

– those who reported to buy fast fashion products very rarely or never. Hence, far-reaching conclusions cannot be made, but results provide an added value in testing a comprehensive model of brand avoidance which is unique in literature.

On a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from "no" to "very strong" effect, features of fast fashion products and companies are reported to exert an average effect on respondents' brand avoidance behaviour in a range from 2.13 to 3.74. The most important patterns in brand avoidance behaviour towards fast fashion brands are mass appeal, not unique features and same/similar look to other products. This result is in line with Kim et al.'s (2013) research, where Korean consumers – who buy fast fashion products – reported to appreciate when the clothing is unique and suitable to express their personality. The lack of those features led to brand avoidance in case of fast fashion brands. For Korean respondents, poor performance of fast fashion products (such as problems with stitching, quality and durability) also led to brand avoidance, while in our research these aspects appeared to be less important in respondents' brand avoidance behaviour as lower prices may result in lower quality expectations (see the findings of Gabrielli et al., 2013). Respondents reported to be most sensitive to product characteristics and least sensitive to features of the store and the personnel. Classifying variables into brand avoidance categories, moral brand avoidance received the highest average score of impact while experiential brand avoidance the lowest, showing how important the moral content can be behind human behaviour, especially in situations of avoiding something, in this case avoiding to buy fast fashion products.

In order to explore the hidden structure of data, multidimensional scaling was used to visualise the proximity of brand avoidance variables. MDS resulted in eight variable groups, representing different kinds of sensitivity, related to the features of fast fashion products and companies, profiling respondents' brand avoidance behaviour. Variables, belonging to those groups of sensitivity, do not necessary show the same structure as provided by the theoretical model as the sources of brand avoidance appear in a combined way in individuals' actual behaviour. The resulting groups of the MDS analysis reflect sensitivities to some crucial phenomena like social and environmental problems, uniformity, underlying values, communication and wearability of clothes, the store concept, attitudes of the store personnel, personal feelings and store atmosphere, as well as connection between brand value and the product. These sensitivities are worth considering not only when fast fashion related brand avoidance behaviour to is analysed but also when acceptance towards a brand and its success factors are evaluated.

Clustering respodents based on their brand avoidance behaviour shed light on the levels of commitment and the most sensitive areas in individual decision making. Three goups were identified: least committed brand avoiders, most committed brand avoiders and brand avoiders who mostly fear their identity. Clusters were evaluated based on the initial model as well as on the results of MDS,

highlighting the importance of brand value and product patterns, uniformity, environmental and social problems as well as communication and wearability of products when it comes to brand avoidance of fast fashion.

Despite limitations of the research, results provide a systematic insight into the phenomenon of brand avoidance and contribute to a deeper understanding of the constituents of individual brand avoidance behaviour, based on a theoretical model and the outcome of multidimensional scaling. Future research – covering a broader scope of respondents and including various age groups into the analysis – is expected to provide further verification of the brand avoidance model and the results of this study.

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