

RESEARCH

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SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION AS A SALES AND SOCIAL CHANGE TOOL: FAST FASHION VS SLOW FASHION

LA COMUNICACIÓN DE LA SOSTENIBILIDAD COMO HERRAMIENTA DE VENTAS Y DE CAMBIO SOCIAL: FAST FASHION VS SLOW FASHION

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de investigación pretende acercar al lector el concepto de sostenibilidad y su evolución en la industria textil. Se hace especial énfasis en conocer las diferencias entre el *fast fashion* y el *slow fashion* y el uso del argumento de la sostenibilidad en redes sociales como herramienta de ventas y/o de cambio social. Las cuatro empresas de moda sobre las que se realiza la investigación son Zara, HM, Patagonia y Ecoalf. Esta investigación exploratoria analiza el contenido de las publicaciones de Instagram durante el mes de noviembre de 2019, período que coincide con la celebración anual de *Black Friday* y el mayor movimiento a nivel mundial contra el cambio climático hasta entonces ocurrido. El objetivo es identificar la comunicación de las acciones sostenibles que ponen en práctica estas marcas y

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cómo tratan de concienciar y transmitir a sus seguidores. Además se realizan dos entrevistas en profundidad a profesionales de Patagonia y Ecoalf, las dos empresas de *slow fashion* escogidas para esta investigación. Se concluye que Zara y HM utilizan la comunicación de la sostenibilidad como herramienta de ventas. No obstante, si se mira desde una perspectiva global, sigue siendo positivo ya que ayuda a dar visibilidad al problema y a educar y sensibilizar a los consumidores a nivel internacional

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sostenibilidad – *Fast Fashion* – *Slow Fashion* – Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) – Impacto Ambiental.- Instagram – Moda – Publicidad no convencional

ABSTRACT

This research investigation aims to bring the reader closer to sustainability and the evolution of the textile industry, placing greater emphasis on knowing how fast fashion differs from slow fashion and its use of sustainability as a marketing tool aimed at generating sales rather than social change. The 4 fashion companies on which the research is carried out are Zara, HM, Patagonia, and Ecoalf. This research studies Instagram posts of the fashion brands mentioned before, during November 2019, the same month in which Black Friday is celebrated and, up until now the month when the largest movement that fought against climate change around the world was held. This analysis aims to understand the sustainable actions that these companies take and how they communicate and educate their consumers. In addition to two personal interviews with professionals from Patagonia and Ecoalf, both slow fashion companies. As a result, this study confirms Zara and HM use sustainability as a sales tool and out of interest. However, if you observe this situation from a global perspective, it can still be considered positive as it helps to give visibility to the problem and educate consumers around the globe.

KEYWORDS: Sustainability – Fast Fashion – Slow Fashion – Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – Environmental Impact – Instagram – Fashion – Non-conventional advertising

A COMUNICAÇÃO DA SUSTENTABILIDADE COMO FERRAMENTA DE VENDAS E DE MUDANÇAS SOCIAIS: *FAST FASHION X SLOW FASHION*

RESUMO:

O presente trabalho de pesquisa pretende aproximar ao leitor o conceito de sustentabilidade e sua evolução na indústria têxtil. Se faz ênfase em conhecer as diferenças entre o *fast fashion* e o *slow fashion* e o uso do argumento da sustentabilidade nas redes sociais como ferramenta de vendas ou de mudanças sociais. As quatro empresas de moda que são realizadas a pesquisa são Zara, HM,

Patagonia e Ecoalf. Esta pesquisa de caráter exploratório analisa o conteúdo das publicações do Instagram durante o mês de novembro de 2019, período que coincide com a celebração anual do *Black Friday* e o maior movimento a nível mundial contra a mudança climática até então ocorrida. O objetivo é identificar a comunicação das ações sustentáveis que estas marcas fazem e como tentam conscientizar e transmitir a seus seguidores. Além disso, foram feitos dois questionários em profundidade para profissionais da Patagonia e Ecoalf, as duas empresas de *slow fashion* escolhidas para esta pesquisa. Como conclusão se obteve que Zara e HM utilizam a comunicação da sustentabilidade como ferramenta de vendas. Pelo outro lado, se olharmos desde uma perspectiva global, continua sendo positivo já que ajuda a dar visibilidade ao problema e a educar e sensibilizar aos consumidores a nível internacional

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Sustentabilidade – *Fast Fashion* – *Slow Fashion* – Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) – Impacto Ambiental - Instagram – Moda – Publicidade não convencional

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research is led by a movement that is increasingly present in today's society, due to the chain of effects that it causes at a global level and the impact it will have on future generations. It's about sustainability and specifically its impact on the fashion industry. Sustainability as a concept is a tool that most large corporations use as a marketing and sales strategy, and that, however, other companies use it more and more as an engine of social change. The fashion industry is extremely broad but the most exploited aspect is one in which we are all participants, the so-called fast fashion, which in the words of Martínez Barreiro (2008):

It is based on speed and consists of supplying and restocking customers with the different garments that mark fashion, and at the same time, it has managed to develop a new modality of clothing, which unites the fashion dimension on the one hand, with a low economic and psychological cost of consumption.

On its opposite side are other branches that have been born as a reaction to the unsustainability of fast fashion, such as slow fashion, which is an environmentally conscious movement whose objective is focused on the responsible consumption of clothing, green fashion, defined by Hallama, Ribo, and Tudela (2011) as the use by an organism of a selective expansion of positive environmental information, which produces a distorted image and a biased bet in favor of the "green" aspects, interpreted as positive by consumers; or eco-fashion. The fashion industry is one of the most dynamic, competitive, and fastest-growing in the world so that it influences the economic, social, and environmental systems very directly (Sharda & Mohan, 2012). Companies have a social responsibility that they must fulfill, and talking about

sustainability in the context of fashion is a challenge for them since it implies a great commitment to stakeholders. That is why brands that communicate sustainability in any way, whatever it may be, must take responsibility and act according to their messages. In this way, if the words do not accompany the actions, it can cause a counterproductive effect on their image. This is one of the reasons why most fast fashion companies have put off embracing sustainability until now when social and environmental responsibility have become indispensable.

On the other hand, globalization and the intensive use of information technologies, as well as the change in our business and consumer culture, have caused a new business model in the fashion industry in which time is the crucial factor (Ferreira, 2015), this is reflected in the fact that companies are in a continuous struggle of who responds to the demand in the shortest time possible. This phenomenon, in turn, is typical of fast fashion, whose cycles are much faster than those of catwalk fashion (Scaturro & Granata, 2010), an example of this is the launch of new products on the market, where it has gone from the production of two annual collections to the weekly renewal of Zara (Ferreira, 2015). In turn, this transformation is the result of the progressive increase in the amount of clothing manufactured and consumed while prices have decreased as a result of increasingly lower production requirements and working conditions (Allwood, Søren, & Rodríguez, 2006).

Indeed, hyper-consumerism or the throwaway culture guides the industry today. This change in the way of consuming has a great environmental impact both due to the increase in production and the amount of clothing waste that is generated by the disposal of it (Kozłowski, Bardecki, & Searcy, 2012). Thus, in response to an increasingly consumerist society, sustainability was born as one of the solutions to the problems that have arisen from globalization.

When we talk about "sustainability" or "reducing our carbon footprint", many of us have probably heard the mantra of what they call the three R's: Reduce, reuse, recycle. This mantra has its origin on World Earth Day in 1970 when it was shown to school students as the solution to the growing problem of waste generated by consumers (Laseter, Ovchinnikov, & Raz, 2010). It is a clear message that recalls the steps to follow to move towards a more sustainable future. However, if we talk about the fashion industry, there are studies where it is stated that this will only be possible when all the actors (designers, advertisers, manufacturers, sellers, and, most importantly, consumers) accept the importance of forging an industry intentionally sustainable, responsible, and dynamic (Scaturro & Granata, 2010).

Meanwhile, sustainability has made more and more companies try to adopt different "sustainable" strategies to obtain a competitive advantage in the market (Kumar, Rahman, Kazmi, & Praveen, 2012). Even so, it should be remembered that sustainability does not generate the same impact on consumers when used as a one-off sales or marketing action, but will be successful in the long term when values are shown to be part of the *raison d'être* of the company. One of the objectives of this research work is to show this comparison.

In this same context, the need for companies to project a global vision has been emphasized since the early 90s. Even then, it was seen how consumers did not only approach the brand for its products and services (Villagra & López, 2013), but there had to be a greater force. A theory that has been transferred to studies today is the golden circle of Simon Sinek (2009), which justifies the idea that every leader must have a global vision. His theory is composed of three questions that are included one within another and with which he demonstrates how the great inspiring leaders of history, whether Apple, Harley Davidson, or Martin Luther King, have a common pattern, their mission answers why. Companies should ask themselves the following three questions: why, how, and what.

First, it all starts with the why. The why is your purpose: your motivation to act, your cause, or your belief; Then, the how are your principles: the processes, the specific actions to carry out the why; and finally, the what are your results, the products or services that you offer in a tangible way with which you show your why or purpose (Sinek, 2009). This theory will be applied in case studies to demonstrate how the actions of companies that are born from the what, are not valued as positively as companies that are born from acting for a cause or belief. The fast-fashion companies that we are going to analyze do not meet the golden circle, since they mainly focus on the what and how. On the other hand, Patagonia or other slow fashion companies are an example of brands that are born from a vision of sustainability.

Ultimately, this research work intends to relate these concepts and, specifically, to analyze the construction of identities and some corporate fashion brands to demonstrate whether their communication resembles their ethical and responsible values. It will be carried out by analyzing the communication and marketing activities of the selected companies and where it is intended to identify and compare if the "sustainable" actions they develop reflect their values, being used as a tool for social change or a strategic sales tool.

According to Cristofol, Alcalá, and Fernández (2018), "Instagram is the app that is currently in fashion" among Millennials, and, therefore, it is the social network chosen to carry out this research, if we take into account that these are the main consumers of fashion (Pérez and Luca, 2018).

2. OBJECTIVES

The research focus of this work is to study the sustainable actions that fashion brands are taking, especially how they communicate them and if they really do it to be more socially responsible or to achieve a greater competitive advantage in the market.

General:

- Learn how different fashion brands communicate sustainability on social media.

Specific:

- SO1. Deepening the concept of sustainability as an environmental, social, and political movement in fashion brands.
- SO2. Differentiate between fast fashion and slow fashion brands from a communicational point of view, analyzing their communication on social networks.
- SO3. Learn about the sustainability communication carried out by four fashion brands on their Instagram profiles from November 1st to 30th, 2019.

As a first hypothesis, it was raised whether sustainability actions in fast fashion companies are used for commercial purposes and to benefit their brand image.

As a second hypothesis, it was raised whether the growing concern about climate change in society has forced fast fashion companies to communicate actions of responsibility with the environment, although this is not reflected in the values of the brand.

3. METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the publications of the Instagram profiles of four fashion brands is carried out, of which two are fast fashion and two are slow fashion, over one month. To study their communication and visual language compared to their corporate values and their position regarding sustainability. This analysis covers two aspects:

- Denotative analysis of the publications, focusing on the images, keywords, and hashtags referring to sustainability and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).
- Connotative analysis of the results to see "beyond" what they show and subjectively interpret if they use sustainability as a tool for social change or a strategic sales tool.

As support, all publications have been analyzed based on a self-made analysis sheet, based on the concepts proposed by Villagra and López (2013), who confirm that responsible companies include in their corporate identity (mission, vision, and values) discourses that are directly related to ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability, aligning with new social demands. The values of the four brands are studied and with the analysis sheet, it is observed if they communicate to educate or sell.

Regarding the content analysis sheet for Instagram posts, the following table has been prepared, with an example, to collect the information and facilitate subsequent analysis:

Table 1. Analysis matrix and example

Denotative analysis							Connotative/interpretive analysis
Publication date	Brand	Type of content	Keywords related to sustainability	Keywords referring to CSR	Hashtags related to sustainability	Image referring to sustainability	Notes to facilitate the analysis of results: ex. <i>Are you using sustainability to educate consumers? Do you have a strategic sales purpose? Are you carrying out a specific action?</i>
12/01/2019	Patagonia	Image	1. Impacts of climate change 2. Ever-increasing pressures on water supplies 3. Conservation	indigenous peoples' ancestral rights	#climatchange	Yes	In this publication, Patagonia is addressing a specific problem about conservation and the impact of climate change on the indigenous population

Source: Self-made.

It was chosen to research the month of November because it was going to be a month where companies had the opportunity and used social networks as a platform to reach the public, participate in the environmental movements that emerged globally, and carry out actions that have as an end change in society.

Finally, qualitative research is carried out using the in-depth interview tool with professionals of the brands in question, to answer questions about the direction of the textile industry, sustainability plans and corporate social responsibility, the actions they develop, their global vision, and expectations for the future. In the case of Ecoalf, it was Jorge Delgado, in charge of Supply Chain Management, who answered the interview questions by email, and on the other hand, it was the Production Chain Management Manager in terms of traceability and animal welfare of Patagonia, who agreed to do an interview via Google Hangouts. Also in the case of Patagonia, for reasons of their privacy and communication policies, the interview could not be recorded but transcribed during the call, and afterward, the answers had to be approved by the interviewee (whose name we cannot give) to be able to be published.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Content analysis

For the content analysis procedure, it was chosen to study the Instagram profiles of 4 fashion brands, two of them belonging to fast fashion: Zara and HM, and two belonging to the so-called slow fashion movement: Patagonia and Ecoalf, during November 2019. The reason this month was chosen was that it coincides with the famous celebration of Black Friday, celebrated on November 29th in 2019, a date in which consumerism is encouraged on a large scale. But at the same time, on that same date, millions of people around the world participated in the largest protest against climate change in history. Furthermore, a large proportion of the people who participated were children, concerned and fighting for their future, this change was largely triggered by the efforts of the activist and pioneer of the global movement "School strike for climate", Greta Thunberg. The protesters chose this date to take a stand against Black Friday since it is considered the day of the year where more clothes are sold, to help raise awareness among citizens on one of the most consumerist days of the year. For example, in the US alone, 6.22 Billion were registered in online purchases (Carlisle, 2019).

This analysis is carried out from two perspectives, a denotative-formal analysis, more objective, and another connotative-interpretive, providing a subjective point of view on what the publications of each brand transmit by studying the images or videos and the caption of each one. The data of the analysis is collected in a self-made table studying all the publications that these brands uploaded to their Instagram profiles throughout the month in question.

4.1.1. Zara

In the first place, in terms of denotative analysis, during November Zara made a total of 51 publications. The types of publications were 36 images, 14 videos, and 1 text. Throughout this month there was only 1 day (11/21/2019) where their publications referred to sustainability to some extent. This day they published 3 images promoting the "Recycle" collection. As for the words that refer to sustainability in the caption, the following words are repeated: recycle, new life, recovered, and environment. And on corporate social responsibility in the publications, they mention how the products are recovered, washed, classified, and tested, collaborating with recycling, using processes to reduce water and energy consumption. The only two hashtags they use are #joinlife and #recycle in all 3 posts. This can be summed up in that only 5.9% of all the publications in November refer to the subject in question. Just as only 5.9% use sustainable words, CSR words, and hashtags about sustainability. And 1.96% use an image referring to sustainability, in the case of Zara is 1 video where they talk about how the recycling process works in factories.

On the other hand, for the connotative analysis, we have extrapolated the following data on the nature of the images in the publications: 63% are classified as

interior images (photoshoot), 21% exterior (urban environment), and lastly, 12% are images taken outdoors or with nature present. This tells us that the majority of their images are taken in photoshoots to promote the products and the new collections, always looking for sale. It can be seen through their social networks that this brand has characteristics of fast fashion: the frequency of publications is 1.7 times a day and in the vast majority a new article belonging to a new collection is shown, which reflects the speed and production capacity of the brand.

It should be noted that Zara specializes more in clothes for daily use, urban, or nighttime, etc. than sportswear or clothes to use in nature, which would explain the lack of outdoor images. It is curious that several of the images in nature promote animal skin shoes, thus showing that they do not commit to animal welfare (Animal Fairtrade).

Regarding the 3 publications where they talk about their recycled collection, the debate revolves around giving a new life to the feathers used for jackets. The video and the caption describe the process they carry out to achieve this and communicate how they comply with energy and water-saving processes to take care of the environment. The video shows the factory where this process is supposedly carried out. The sensation transmitted by the video is similar to that of the movie "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", it is very romanticized and shows a peaceful and quiet environment, one of the reasons is because no one is shown working in the factory. This makes one wonder if they are hiding the workers and the location of the factory so as not to show the working conditions in which they carry out their work, the social group, etc.

Lastly, despite releasing the line "Recycle" that aims to show their commitment to climate change, on November 29th, Zara did not make any publication. We, therefore, understand that they do not have a real commitment to the environment and that they avoid publishing on that date so as not to generate any type of reaction from the public since it also coincides with Black Friday. In contrast, we can think that it is positive that they did not refer to Black Friday in their publications, without encouraging consumerism more.

4.1.2. HM

In the first place, regarding the total publications, HM publishes considerably more than Zara, adding a total of 86 publications in November, which translates to an average of 2.9 times a day. Of these, 72 were images and 14 videos. During the month there was only 1 day (11/25/2019) in which sustainability was referred to, where they promoted the "conscious skincare products", a conscious beauty line. As data, we can obtain that 1.2% of the publications of November are related to sustainability, using words that we categorize as sustainable. On the other hand, on no occasion is a hashtag used on the subject in question, nor an image or video that addresses the problem.

Secondly, regarding the interpretive analysis, it must be said that 72% of the images or videos are taken indoors, which are made up of photographs of individual articles or photoshoots with models, and in many cases, they use as resources celebrities like Kendall Jenner or Chiara Ferragni. Furthermore, 26% of the content is created on the exterior where they tend to promote a new collection or for people to see the articles in a real and everyday environment. Finally, only 2% of the publications showed nature.

On the other hand, it must be added that the only time where they publish about the new conscious beauty line, they do not include in the caption any information about the line, why it is conscious, and how it helps the planet. Given this, it seems like a case of greenwashing, where they try to give the impression that they are sustainable products with the use of associated words (such as conscious) but with a commercial purpose.

At the same time, throughout the month they launch new products and collections for Christmas, almost a month before the holiday. It can be concluded, therefore, that they excessively promote consumerism despite being the time when more is bought and as a consequence, there are very high pollution and waste peaks.

Finally, add that on November 29th they published 3 images, but they did not refer to the movement that was emerging around the world but promoted new articles.

4.1.3. Patagonia

Patagonia is very different from the other three analyzed brands by various factors that we will explain below. It has a slower publication frequency, a total of 27 publications in November, an average of 0.9 times per day. The type of content of the publications is 20 images, 6 videos, and 1 graphic with text. We found that sustainability and CSR were referenced in captions 27% of the time. On only one occasion they use a hashtag, and it is #wornwear, a program or service for repairs and recycling of products that Patagonia offers.

The words they use in the captions cover many topics such as the place of production of their articles (local), the certificates of commitment to the environment and animals (Paris Climate Accord), the material from which the products are made (organic cotton, natural fabrics, used-garments), the technique they use to manufacture and design them (wornwear, recrafted, recycled, renorepair), and the behavior or values they try to educate (passing things down).

We can add that 26% of the time, the image or video has a very direct reference to sustainability, either because it was an explanatory video about how they create clothes from recycled bottles or the image with a text from the CEO of Patagonia where he communicates his concern that the US is no longer part of the Paris Agreement that protects and fights against climate change.

Regarding the interpretive analysis, we see that all the images of Patagonia are taken in nature, doing sports, or working outdoors, reflecting the values of the brand. In no image is a particular product promoted, rather they are very natural photographs of everyday people using the products in real situations. In fact, the vast majority of photos are large general shots where nature takes more prominence. The person usually comes second and the articles occupy the background since in most cases the logo of the brand is not seen or the photo is taken from such a distance that it is not possible to distinguish if they are carrying a product of Patagonia. Also, on many occasions, the caption does not refer to the products but to the sports activity that is being carried out or to the destination where the photo is taken.

It should also be added that after analyzing the images, in 30% of the cases they promote a product or collection directly and when they do, they report on how the product was created, the materials, or its characteristics, distinctive of slow fashion, like durability for example.

On the other hand, the type of content also indicates to us the transparency that the company has with its actions and its consumers, they have strong values and use their voice to generate change. Like the aforementioned statement by its CEO where he expresses his growing concern that the US is not part of the Paris Agreement or in educational videos where they try to educate consumers about the life cycle of their products.

Regarding the videos, only 1 of the 6 makes direct reference to the consumers of Patagonia's products, it was published on 11/15/2019, and instead of talking about production, the video deals with the brand's philosophy. It is a video that follows a "storytelling" narrative where two friends of about 15 years of age tell their relationship with sports, nature, and the importance of not needing so much, but of passing on what they have learned from generation to generation and how they have always done the same with their clothes. Patagonia products have a history, they have brands that are childhood memories, they are garments that their mothers wore, and emphasize the added value that the brand gives to clothing.

Another of the videos deals with the service mentioned above, Worn Wear, here the workers of this Patagonia repair factory themselves talk about the history behind Worn Wear, slow fashion, giving clothes a new life, reusing, recreate, etc. And do all this without the need to use another resource of the planet that is not the resource of people and their labor. They all share the same philosophy, which is the opposite of fast fashion; they are workers who give importance to things and want to make a better world. In fact, in this case, Patagonia joins with Svey, a brand specialized in the reconstruction of used items, to make a new collection of garments that were not repairable. As a result of using every last resort, you could buy a jacket made from 6 used jackets. Another of the videos they publish is a continuation of the one described above, this one continues talking about Worn Wear but emphasizing the impact of the fashion industry on the environment, it tries to be an educational video to justify the value of Worn Wear.

Similar to these two videos, they also publish a video in illustration format about their "better sweaters" where they explain the study of the life cycle of the product starting by using recyclable bottles and waste from landfills that are decomposed and then converted into materials with which to create the sweatshirts.

Finally, on November 29th they publish another informative video where they launch a donation program that will be open from that day until December 31st, spanning from Black Friday to the end of Christmas. With this video, they want consumers to give their loved ones, donations to movements and organizations that fight for climate change and the environment, instead of going out to buy in stores. Basically, they want people to be more aware when buying or giving gifts at the most consumerist time of the year.

4.1.4. Ecoalf

Ecoalf's behavior is very different from Patagonia's. The frequency of publication of Ecoalf is very similar to that of Patagonia, with a total of 32 publications, which translates to 1.06 times a day. Of these, 2 were videos, 1 text, and 29 publications were images, of which 2 showed the Ecoalf team. The last 6 publications, in the week of Black Friday and Strike for climate, consisted of images with statistics of the effect of the textile industry on the planet to promote the education of people on the subject.

On the other hand, 100% of the publications use a word that refers to sustainability or CSR. We note that Ecoalf is very focused on manufacturing their own products and the extent to which they do so. Their slogan is "there is no planet B" and it is repeated in almost all publications. They also emphasize innovation, concern for future generations, protecting the planet, recycling, reducing the carbon and ecological footprint, or with some products they communicate that they are vegan and certified by PETA. In 97% of the publications, they use the hashtag #becausethereisnoplanetb, on only one occasion they do not use a hashtag, and on another, they use the hashtag #RecyclingBlackFriday, which is when they publish the text with the words "Act now" on 11/10/2019 to report on the strike against climate change on November 21st in Berlin and on November 29th in Madrid where they will join. It should also be noted that 31% of the time the images directly refer to sustainability and that on the rest of occasions (69%) the images are directly promoting a product.

Now, if we talk about the connotative analysis, Ecoalf generally promotes their products a lot, since they are usually images taken in a photoshoot, in a professional environment where they intend to show the characteristics of the product or models wearing the products, unlike Patagonia where they show a lifestyle. Even so, on all occasions, Ecoalf is transparent with consumers explaining the sustainable materials from which the products are made. On the other hand, on the occasions in which it promotes children's collections, they emphasize generating the change for future

generations, and in all cases, the children wear clothes with the slogan "there is no planet B".

In general, they communicate their commitment to help the planet and find innovative solutions, serve as a means of dissemination, and educate the world, besides helping hundreds of educational institutions and foundations that fight to protect the environment and take care of the planet. Another of the recurring themes throughout November is that of RecyclingBlackFriday, where they show their stand against a day that only promotes consumerism and they decide not to participate as a brand on Black Friday, but to take to the streets to protest against climate change in the two stores they have in Madrid and Berlin. On November 24th, a few days before the Black Friday celebration, they publish an educational video where they show images of the great repercussions that the fashion industry has on the environment, photos of factories, pollution, etc.; and where they explain why they will not participate.

From that day until the end of the month, Ecoalf publishes a series of images with statistics on the reality of the textile industry and always accompanied by the message "educate yourself". We can see how the brand presents their commitment to the environment and during that week they do not publish anything promoting their products but rather trying to educate consumers about the impact that our actions have, no matter how minimal they may seem. To exemplify this, they used statistics such as "The average population only wears the same garment 7 times" or "It takes 2,700 liters of water to make a cotton shirt, approximately what a person drinks in 2.5 years".

4.2. In-depth interviews

To complete the research on the content analysis of the Instagram profiles of the four brands, in-depth interviews are carried out. The objective was to know internally the vision that employees have about the brand, their commitment to nature, their opinion on fast fashion, consumer perception, changes in fashion in the textile industry, and the impact on future generations.

The research design involved four participants, one from each analyzed brand, to make a comparison of fast fashion and slow fashion companies against sustainability. However, despite contacting them, it was possible to contact Ecoalf and Patagonia, who were willing to collaborate, after a confidentiality agreement.

The interview went through a series of phases: first, the interviewer made an introduction about the research to be carried out, the reason for the research, the object of study, and the types of questions; second, the interviewee explains the role that he develops in the brand; and finally, the interview begins. Sometimes the interviewee answers several questions at once.

Next, the results of Ecoalf and Patagonia will be presented against the following values:

4.2.1. Assess the product's life cycle

Affirmatively, the environmental impact generated by the entire life cycle of the products is something of which both companies are aware and they continuously try to improve. Ecoalf, in recent months, has implemented more precise measures to control the environmental and social impact of their garments, in fact, next season it will be seen in the articles themselves, which will mean more transparency about the process and impact of each product and give more visibility so that consumers are aware of the effect of the fashion industry on the planet.

In the case of Patagonia, it is a company that tries to ensure that the entire production chain complies with the corresponding requirements and certifications, always following what they communicate and continuously seeking to minimize the impact. Furthermore, the Worn Wear branch tries to preserve quality products and materials and keep them in circulation. Moreover, Patagonia has what is considered the largest textile repair factory in the US so that buyers can send the products for repair if they are damaged over time. Even so, in that factory, they only have about 80 workers, which reflects that the products are very high quality because the repairs are minimal.

4.2.2. Assess the opinion on fast fashion

Patagonia defends that they are a small company compared to HM or Inditex, which are giants in the market. If these, for example, make only 5% of their fashion lines made of sustainable materials, it may seem little compared to Patagonia, whose percentage would be much higher, but globally speaking, 5% in HM is much more than everything that Patagonia does because of the volume of the company. Moreover, at no time do they disparage fast fashion companies, but add that, if companies like these can move their finger, however minimal it may seem, it has a great impact on a global level and that is something that must be considered positive for the industry. On the other hand, the interviewee argues that, although the reasons why fast fashion companies carry out sustainable actions may have a different purpose than Patagonia, it continues to be something positive since it brings these issues to the commercial market and can give voice to issues faster than Patagonia, which could take years to achieve it due to less capacity.

Ecoalf, like Patagonia, also affirms that any action that is carried out will always be positive. But Ecoalf adds that these actions have to be developed with criteria, it is necessary to think about the entire production chain and not just one aspect or action. They state that it is probably greenwashing but that if companies see that these sustainable actions translate into sales and that it is positively accepted by customers, they will end up investing resources in being more sustainable and committing to the environment, which would be positive. Finally, they suggest that customers also have to be aware and know how to have criteria when buying so as not to fall into greenwashing strategies, in fact, they give as an example that if a label says recycled polyester it is 5%, and the rest is conventional polyester, it does

not make much of a difference, but it is also the job of consumers to educate themselves and be responsible when buying.

4.2.3. Assess the price factor

Regarding the price factor, both interviewees answer the question practically the same way, consumers have to become aware and understand that if a shirt costs 5 euros, as is the case of fast fashion companies, someone or something is paying for the remaining value of the product. It is about setting a fair price that meets standards that protect the environment and all the people involved in the product's value chain. If all companies were transparent and consumers could see on their labels everything behind a single garment to pay, it would make prices more justifiable.

Another issue that both companies also share is that of educating the population to reduce their purchase frequency and carry out responsible consumption. We have to learn to live with less and higher quality: nobody needs to have 7 coats in the closet, and if people put this into practice, the slow fashion industry could sustain itself in the long term, as they would be happy to buy a quality coat at a fair price and knowing that it has much greater durability.

4.2.4. Assess the quality factor

In the following interview question, it is intended to see if awareness of sustainable fashion principles could change the consumer attitude of most people. Both brands argue that sustainability education is key to changing people's habits, but that the fashion industry is only one part of the entire spectrum and needs to be applied as much as possible to all aspects of our daily life.

Ecoalf also adds that for this market adoption to be successful, it is also necessary to give importance to the design and quality of the garments, so that consumers can wear them with pride. Patagonia, on the other hand, defends that their designs do not vary much from season to season since they seek to make timeless designs, and durability is one of the factors that the brand gives more importance to. In fact, Nicholas Allen quotes "the jacket that has gone through the repair factory several times is probably my favorite garment because it has history and charisma."

Both Patagonia and Ecoalf affirm that neither is perfect, at the end of the day they are a company that sells products and these have an impact on the environment. But within "the bad" they try to find innovative solutions that consume less water, less energy, etc., serve as an example to other companies, and educate people. In the case of Patagonia, they do not even consider themselves as a fashion company, but activists who fight to take care of our planet. Both agree that dressing is a human need, but Ecoalf emphasizes "many years have passed since that need was "met" and now we find ourselves in excessive consumption of garments". In conclusion, responsible citizens are needed who value quality over quantity.

4.2.5. Assess the cost of production

Finally, we asked if slow fashion can be commercially viable for people with less financial capacity and if slow fashion could satisfy the demand of a future environmentally conscious market. Ecoalf assures that one of the reasons why prices are higher in the present is because the industry is dominated by fast fashion and they are the ones who win, but if we lived in an environmentally conscious market and those who try to do well were awarded, the production costs would be standardized and it would become more accessible to the market. Even so, it is reiterated about consumption: you do not need 7 coats but 1 of quality that lasts several years, and they defend that despite the initial effort, in the long term you save by not throwing it away and buying a new one.

In these lines, Patagonia says how everyone remembers their “Don’t buy this jacket” campaign, it was one of the actions that probably had the most impact and the idea behind it was exactly that, if you don't need it, don't buy it. They also argue that there is something that brands cannot control and that is how people decide to consume their products, but what they always try to communicate is: “don't buy it if you don't need it and if you have a garment and it works, repair it; and if you have to buy something, buy an already used or recycled garment, try to exhaust all the possibilities before making an impulsive purchase”. And, finally, if you are going to go shopping, consider using the best materials you can and buying in a place where environmental and animal welfares are taken care of in all aspects of the supply chain. They conclude that if it costs a little more, instead of buying 10 t-shirts at 7 euros, you can buy 1 t-shirt for 35 euros, knowing that it is made with organic cotton and in a fair-trade factory.

5. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Through this research, the communication of sustainability in fast fashion and slow fashion brands has been deepened, focusing on the study of four well-known brands Zara, HM, Patagonia, and Ecoalf, two of each fashion trend respectively, and in its use of sustainability communication as a marketing or social change tool. The information collected and the analyzes carried out, allow us to provide answers to the hypotheses raised at the beginning of the research.

As a first hypothesis, it was raised whether the communication of sustainability actions in fast fashion companies are used for commercial purposes and to benefit the image of their brand. It is verified, therefore, that these companies, especially Zara and HM, bear in mind sustainability in some way in their business plan, however minimal it may seem. Both companies have launched a line that is classified within sustainability, so it can be said that a change of mentality is emerging in consumers and large companies seek to satisfy that demand and the needs of consumers who are increasingly environmentally aware. Given that the percentage of publications or references around sustainability were minimal in the case of both brands, despite analyzing a month of great importance for the environment and climate change, neither was involved or gave a voice to the cause. For this reason, it is confirmed

that after promoting a sustainable line it is considered inconsistent and that it has only a commercial purpose since they do not actively participate. This point could be questioned if fast fashion companies had been available to answer the questions of this research. We take their refusal as an answer that confirms the initial hypothesis.

Likewise, as they answer in the interviews of slow fashion companies, the consumer also has to be responsible and see that if a label says that it is recycled, they must have judgment and know when it is a matter of greenwashing. Finally, to say that both companies agree that any action carried out by fast fashion companies will ultimately be positive for the fashion industry and helps open an increasingly sustainable path. With the communication of these actions, knowledge and voice are given to the market, which is globally positive.

As a second hypothesis, it was raised whether the growing concern about climate change in society has forced fast fashion companies to communicate actions of responsibility with the environment, although this is not reflected in their brand values. After the research carried out, it is concluded that it is true that these companies have seen the need to adapt to the new "trends" in the market. The incorporation of sustainable lines is not something that Zara or HM have been doing since they were born, it is not part of the brand's values, and it has only appeared in recent years due to the growing social alarm for the environment. Patagonia defends this by showing that slow fashion companies do not try to compete with each other, but that they really seek the best for the planet and that each one individually tries to reduce their carbon footprint. Patagonia affirms that it is true that sustainability is not part of the DNA of Zara or HM, but that each time they communicate more and more actions of great impact, being able to move the industry much faster than Patagonia, for example, and it is something that must be valued.

It was also raised how the public perceives the communication of the sustainable actions of HM or Zara. As already mentioned, an informed consumer may perceive that these actions are a case of greenwashing, or in the case of a regular consumer of fast fashion brands, feel a certain gratification for thinking that they are doing something good for the planet. This question cannot be answered with certainty as there has been no qualitative analysis of the consumers of the brands in question. However, the answers from the two interviews suggest that, although it does not matter how the public perceives the sustainable actions of these brands, the fact that they are exposed to them every time they go to the stores will have some kind of repercussion, be it educational, informative, etc. Even so, the solution to the problem is also for consumers to learn to be more responsible, carrying out conscious consumption, and asking questions such as Who is paying in the value chain for this shirt to cost 5 euros? What products is this shirt made of? Where was the shirt made? Do I really need this shirt or is it a whim?

Basically, consumers also need to do their part, companies can encourage the purchase, but the final decision is in their hands. The responsibility lies in each one to try to understand the interests behind each action and to be critical. The planet's resources are limited and to control their spending, consumption habits should be

transformed into slower ones and learn to live with less so as not to compromise future generations. This is a fundamental pillar of sustainability.

Finally, it is questioned whether there is a correlation between the communication of the sustainable actions of specific fashion brands with having a commercial purpose and the communication of global actions with a social purpose. Regarding the slow-fashion companies that have been studied and interviewed for this research, it is clear that their vision goes far beyond just selling. Ecoalf, for example, shows itself as a fashion company that does promote its products but invests in innovation, technology, sustainable design, and transparency, to create products made of recycled material, with low environmental impact, and respectful of animals. Analyzing their networks, it can be affirmed that they focus on the presentation of their products and information about their production. On the other hand, Patagonia does not just promote its products, but rather communicates a lifestyle, its values, sports, nature, needing the basics to be happy. It can be said that its business model revolves more around a circular economy, not only when it comes to manufacturing products like Ecoalf, but also involving consumers with measures such as the repair factory or its Worn Wear line, as its page says "Because the best we can do for the planet is to reduce consumption and make more use of the things we already have."

In contrast, in the case of HM and Zara, the frequency of publication and promotion of articles from new collections means that a specific action such as the publication of the promotion of a sustainable line or product remains forgotten and becomes one more strategy for sale. The lack of publications that addressed the issue of climate change or, in the case of HM, the continued promotion of Christmas, leads to the conclusion that its sustainable actions do not have a global purpose but rather a commercial purpose.

Finally, as explained in both interviews, it is not about fighting with each other. We want to live on a better planet and that our actions do not compromise future generations, which is why any action, no matter how minimal it may seem, must be considered positive.

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