

Misconceptions of Sustainability within the Luxury Fashion Industry

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Introduction

This research is an examination of how fast fashion brands and designer brands are integrating sustainable and ethical practices into their designs within the industry. Fast fashion is the reinvention of slow fashion that focuses on trend-driven designs. Luxury goods are defined as goods for which demand increases as income rises. This specific industry understands that once that style is no longer popular with consumers they no longer can make money. Due to this, the Fast Fashion industry creates clothes out of cheap material that doesn't last caused by the fast pace of the trend cycle. Luxury fashion is a much slower form of design, that is focused on creativity, exclusiveness, and allure. One of the biggest differences between fast fashion and slow fashion is that creating luxury products takes time, limiting availability, and not mass-producing. In return, this actually slows the fashion cycle, reducing the amount of waste associated with creating fashion products. However, without a clear understanding of what consumers should look for when shopping for more sustainable fashion brands, this all can become overwhelming. This research will explore the disconnect in consumers' knowledge regarding sustainability within the luxury fashion industry.



Courtesy of: Forever Unique, 2021

<https://www.foreverunique.com/fr/white-blazer-wrap-dress-with-military-buttons-ex19381>



Courtesy of: Neiman Marcus, 2021.

https://www.neimanmarcus.com/p/balmain-grain-de-poudre-wrap-dress-prod230340529?ccid=NMC5_GooglePLA&utm_source=google_shopping&gclid=CjwKCAjwvMqDBh8EiwA28mPjW13cGjLHcXR7NpH6AVYy8EZvcWZwzDv0at6mymUzR3nR3BoCF9MQAvD_BwE&gclid=awds

Methods

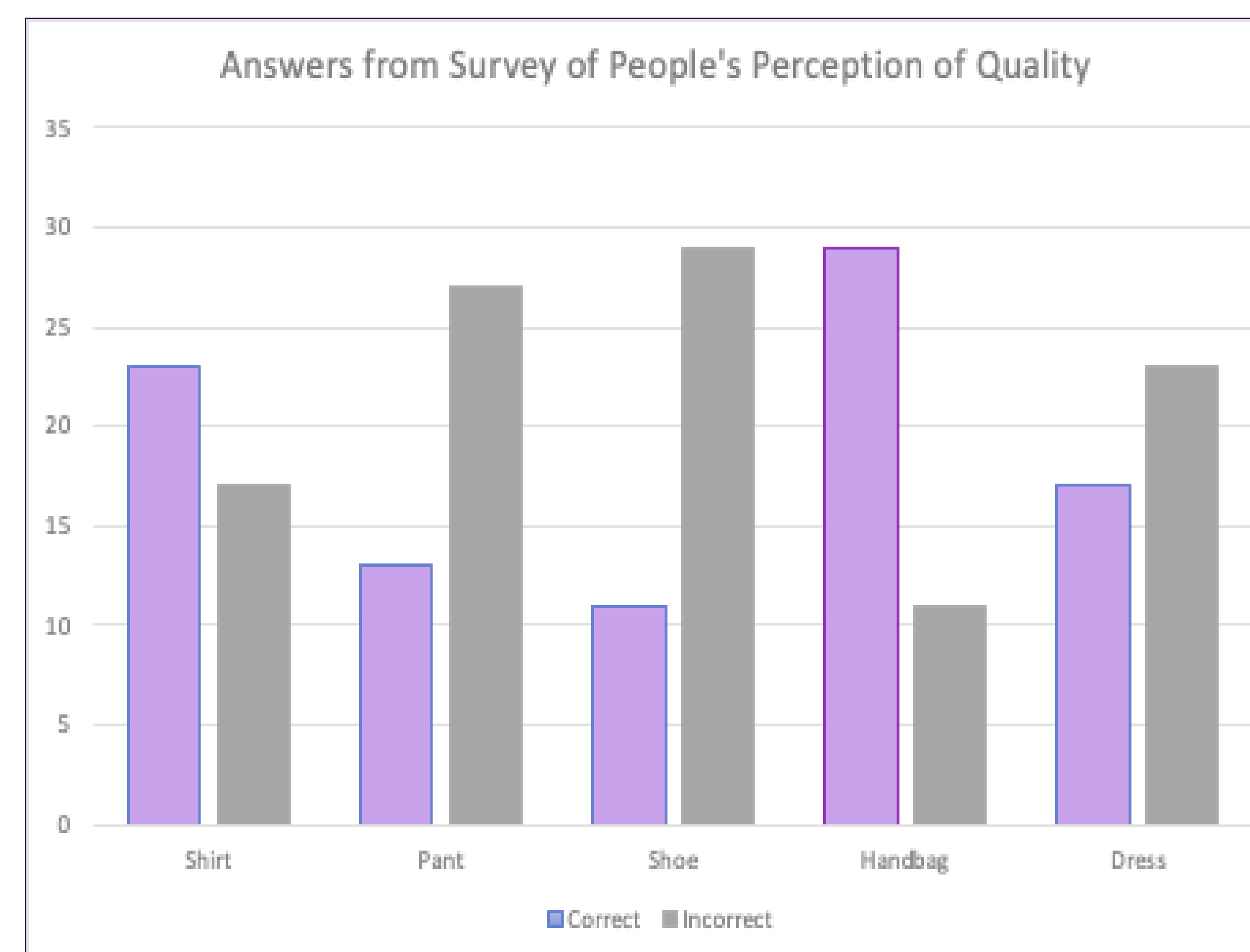
A survey was created via SurveyMonkey and taken through electronic means. The survey consisted of questions regarding:

- Age
- Occupation
- Opinion of quality based on images of various fashion items; one a luxury product and one a fast fashion product.
- Participant method of distinguishing quality factors between the two images
- Participant opinion on the increase in quality with the price difference between the luxury product image and fast fashion product image

The survey received a total of 40 responses from the age ranges of 18 to 55+. Overall, our results suggested that consumers are generally not able to distinguish between designer and fast fashion pieces. On average, consumers were only able to identify the designer piece 43.5% of the time.

Results

After concluding the survey, the results showed that people's perception of quality when comparing two images varied depending on personal preference and their own style. The graph below displays the respondents' choices between what item they perceived as the better quality. Overall, respondents were able to select the higher quality designer good about half the time.



The last two questions of the survey asked the respondents to elaborate on what methods they used to distinguish quality factors as well as, if they believe there is a sincere increase in quality with the price difference between luxury and fast fashion.

Overall, respondents use mostly verbal cues to distinguish quality such as, whether or not they would wear items, trendy, photo quality, and visual perception. Also, most of the respondents felt that there was not a sincere quality with the price of luxury products when compared to the fast fashion products.

References

Godart, F. & Seong, S. (2014). *Is sustainable luxury fashion possible?* INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France, 1-16.
Joy, A., Sherry, J.F. Jr., Venkatesh, A., Wang, J., & Chan, R. (2012). Fast fashion sustainability, and the ethical appeal of luxury brands. *Fashion Theory*, 16 (3), 273-296.

WHAT IS FAST FASHION?

- Inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends
- Samples ideas from high-end designers and celebrity culture and reproduces them quickly and cheaply
- Contributes to the system of overproduction and consumption



Credit: CThe Peach Project

Conclusion

After reviewing the results from the survey, respondents from the ages of 18 years old and younger to 55 years old and over had similar conclusions as to what their perception of product quality and the correlation of price was. That being said, the respondents' answers demonstrate that their perception of quality isn't strictly based on the price, but rather on their personal preference, style, and what is the best deal. Education and research on how luxury brands produce their products can help to combat and change consumer's perceptions of luxury brands being overpriced and unattainable. The current state of the industry is not just in the hands of one segment of the industry but in the hands of everyone involved from creation and design to production and manufacturing to consumer choice. Regardless of a consumer's perception of luxury products, they are often considered more sustainable as consumers keep them for a longer period of time. This is due to cost and quality factors, thereby decreasing the probability of them ending up in a landfill. Also, there is a large re-sale market for luxury goods, which means that even if a consumer is "tired" of their luxury products, there is a better chance they will resell the item to someone else, rather than throwing it away, thereby increasing the textile's lifecycle.