The Road Toward Sustainability in the Romanian Fast Fashion Organisations

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Abstract: The continuous level of consumption in the fast fashion industry has a concerning effect and needs to be addressed through a strategic approach, as it has a considerable environmental, social, and economic impact. The study contributes to a better understanding of the barriers hindering the transition toward a more sustainable future in the fast fashion industry through qualitative research. We conducted the qualitative research using the Grounded Theory, which allows an evaluation from different and multiple perspectives, resulting in a more exhaustive and justified result. Our approach was exploratory, and the results will be tested in future studies. The purpose of the paper was to map the road to sustainable fashion by understanding the obstacles/barriers, and solutions/drivers for sustainable development. The sustainability fast fashion organizational barriers were identified in the international literature through a structured literature review and further tested for the Romanian market through interviews. After the NVivo Analysis, the identified barriers referenced the most to least, from a Romanian organisational dimensions perspective were financial barriers, insufficient management engagement, lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure, eco-friendly packaging, and stakeholder and supplier barriers. The most mentioned driver dimension from an organisational point of view was the existence of a financial reward system for stakeholders, funding programs from the Government and EU, the implementation of mandatory regulations, and the possibility of creating an infrastructure.

Keywords: fast fashion; challenges; qualitative analysis; motivators; sustainability.

Introduction

The current practices surrounding attire creation, manufacturing, and consumption are raising significant environmental concerns. Ranked among the world's top polluters, the fashion sector is a significant consumer of resources, characterised by worldwide production and supply chains, and driven by trends rather than essential needs (Niinimäki et al., 2020; Quantis, 2018). The fast fashion industry produces approximately 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases annually, which exceeds the combined emissions of all international flights and maritime shipping. The industry also contributes to considerable water usage, with an estimated 79 trillion liters of water consumed every year, as it is a prime contributor to 20% of all industrial water pollution resulting from textile dyeing and treatments (Niinimäki et al., 2020), this pollution also contributing to the growing issue of microplastics in the oceans. Alongside environmental impacts, the industry faces substantial clothing waste, with an estimated $500 billion value lost annually due to non-recycled clothing, clothes thrown away after a year or two, and consumers choosing fashion over necessity (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Predictions suggest that by 2030, 102 million tons of apparel could be discarded unless sustainable alternatives are adopted, and increase of 50% (Dzhengiz et al., 2023). Compounding this, 85% of textiles go to landfills yearly (Global Fashion Agenda, 2017). Moreover, consumers worldwide are buying approximately 80 billion new items of clothing annually, highlighting the problems associated with fast fashion from an environmental point of view, which include chemical use, textile waste, significant carbon footprints, waste of water, and further contributions to pollution of water, soil, air, and the depletion of the ozone layer (Abbate et al., 2024;

Bick et al., 2018) as sustainability is a multifaced concept having environmental, social, and economic aspects, it's essential to mention that a significant portion of fast fashion garments and accessories is manufactured in countries like China and Bangladesh, where production costs are minimal. The global nature of the fashion industry leads to the creation of jobs that can offer an escape path from poverty, yet this often comes with considerable drawbacks. Typically, wages are low; work environments are harsh, hours long, formal job agreements absent, with inadequate attention to worker safety and health, leaving employees exposed to discriminatory practices (Mukherjee, 2015; Turker & Altuntas, 2014). The labour force is frequently composed of women and children, leading to pervasive issues of sexual exploitation, child labour, and verbal and physical abuse (James, 2022; Mukherjee, 2011; Zhang et al., 2021).

Furthermore, traditional approaches to managing the severe waste problem and general sustainability challenges have proven ineffective globally in curbing the relentless increase in consumption and as resources are limited, there is an urgency to address these issues (Garcia-Ortega et al., 2023). In this context is therefore mandatory to comprehend the organizational barriers to be able to address those barriers. Our goal will be, therefore, to provide a comprehensive look at the organizational barriers found in the international literature that will be used as a starting point to validate them on the Romanian market. Through the process, new dimensions and barriers might be identified, and the potential drivers to address them to be discussed. To achieve this goal, we interviewed 10 respondents, working as fashion managers or environmental consultants.

The main obstacles found in the way of building a sustainable fashion ecosystem in Romania were the lack of studies in Romania and finding studies that were debating both perspectives of the consumers and the organization. This was seen as an opportunity to validate international barriers in the Romanian market, as our research will be conducted in Romania, although the apparel industry agrees it's the moment to innovate and join partnerships aimed at shaping the industry's sustainable future and bringing new consumer values, the Romanian market is still facing challenges toward reaching sustainable development (Forbes, 2018). Furthermore, we need to rethink production and consumption in the fashion industry and find new ways to educate consumers and businesses. Even with the adoption of the National Waste Prevention plan from the Romanian government, there are still no official functional strategic approaches to combating these barriers in the fashion industry, leading to insufficient triggers for the businesses to implement sustainable practices.

The study's main implication is to better understand the obstacles that hinder the journey toward a more sustainable future from an organizational perspective and ways to address them. Currently, there is limited research available on the ever-evolving barriers to sustainability, especially considering the Romanian market. Therefore, further research is needed to gain deeper insights into the perspectives of both companies and consumers, enabling the industry to adapt more quickly to the ongoing shift. The paper aims to contribute valuable insights for practitioners and academicians, fostering the development of innovative strategies and solutions that drive us towards a more sustainable future. Building upon a previous structured literature review study that showed these barriers, we created the interview and validated those barriers through qualitative research. Part of the research instruments included also drivers to address them.

The research gap lies in the fact that the research is conducted in Romania and the specific context of the country's regulatory framework is a big factor that will influence our results questions as derived from previous new studies calling for future developments on the topic. Our research questions will provide an answer to "What are the organisational barriers to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry in Romania?" and "From a specialist's point of view, what motivators/drivers can help overcome organisational barriers?".

Next, we will provide an overlooked about the international organisational barriers identified, the methodology of the paper, results, discussion, and conclusions.

Literature review

Organisational barriers

An article questioning what we know about sustainable fashion and how the future looks argued that radical change might follow only through innovation or a better understanding of the consumers' behaviours and empowering changemakers (Mukendi et al., 2020). Authors have already discussed a change in the consumer's awareness level linked to sustainable and eco-friendly fashion products as a step towards a circular economy transition in the fashion industry (Mishra et al., 2020). We are also talking about an industry with a highly competitive structure that pressures the costs, newest trends, consumer satisfaction, and social responsibility (Turker & Altuntas, 2014), needing permanent research and updates. In an article from 2018, which debated the main challenges faced to reach a circular economy in Romania in the fashion industry, the following barriers were mentioned: the lack of awareness regarding the circular economy in textile apparel, the existence of a vicious circle, and the absence of events/circles where specialists from fashion industry can meet and discuss these issues (Staicu & Pop, 2018).

Other challenges brought into the discussion are the workforce qualification, the legislation as it offers little to no legal support from authorities, the lack of waste management strategies as there are very few entrepreneurs dealing with waste, and the fact that local production lacks sustainable fibres. Consumers also play a big role in choosing the fashion companies that produce eco-friendly clothes, as there is a gap between the industry movement and the consumer's willingness to adopt more sustainable practices. The continuous rise of fast fashion because of permanent consumption has translated into a disposable culture (Singh & Bansal, 2024). Another study pointed out that we already see fashion shows exclusively for clothes manufactured from recycled materials like the Kazakhstan Fashion Week 2020 Reduce. Recycle. Reuse. Unfortunately, consumers are not ready yet to spend extra on sustainable fashion. We even have well-known fashion designers from Romania who only produce and specialize in sustainable designs; therefore, we are responsible for choosing our products wisely (Dragan, 2020). Though it has been proved that second hand trading of fast fashion can reduce carbon footprint by 90% (Li et al., 2024).

The first identified list of organizational barriers toward sustainability development can be seen in the Table below and the road toward identifying them in the article Barriers to reaching sustainability in the fast fashion industry (Patruti, 2023). As further research has been conducted, I have categorized the potential barriers into additional dimensions as more barriers have been identified. These dimensions were initially stated in a study by Bhandari et al. (2022) and include management, government support and infrastructure barriers; supplier barriers; finance barriers; material barriers, sustainable packaging human resources barriers, and customer perception barriers. These dimensions were adapted from an international view to a more focused approach to the Romanian Market (refer to Table 1). The table outlines various barriers to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry across different dimensions: management, government, infrastructure dimension, supplier barrier, financial barrier, material barrier, and sustainable packaging and human resources. The barriers included in these dimensions are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Organizational barriers toward sustainable development in the fast fashion industry

Barrier dimension	Specific barriers	Sources
Management, government, and infrastructure	Limited support from governmental and non-governmental authorities to address the issue.	Pedersen and Andersen (2015); Wu et al. (2022)
	Insufficient management engagement	Khoo (2019); Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir (2019)
	Lack of awareness coming from organizations in understanding what sustainable fashion means and how it might be achieved.	Connell and Kozar (2017); Hur and Cassidy (2019); Moon et al. (2015); Staicu and Pop (2018); Wagner and Heinzel (2020); Wang et al. (2017)
	Lack of desire to adapt and transition.	Pedersen and Andersen (2015);
	Inadequate existing infrastructure for utilization, reprocessing materials, and fabric	Hur and Cassidy (2019); Kazancoglu et al. (2020); Koep et al. (2021); Vermunt et al. (2019)
	Perceived trade-offs of sustainability with other design criteria, such as cost, design, and fashion trends	GOEL (2018); Hur and Cassidy (2019)
Supplier barrier	Weak partnerships between stakeholders and questionable commitment	Donaldson and Preston (1995); Farooque et al. (2019); Khoo (2019); Pedersen and Andersen (2015)
	Lack of training and reward system for developing sustainable behaviour	Ambekar et al. (2019); Kazancoglu et al. (2020); Koep et al. (2021); Majumdar and Sinha (2019)
	Problematic communication regarding suppliers' sustainable behaviours to the consumers	Blanchet (2017); Bly et al. (2015); Evans and Peirson-Smith (2018); Henninger et al. (2015); Henninger (2015); Hyllegard et al. (2014); Hwang et al. (2015); James and Montgomery (2017); de Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017); Kim and Hall, (2015); Moon et al. (2015); Mukendi et al. (2020); Visser et al. (2015); Ma et al. (2017)
Financial barrier	Higher cost of investment in innovative technologies and raw materials and uncertainty when talking about the return on investment	Mukendi, Davies, Glozer & McDonagh (2020); Sirilertsuwan et al. (2019); Wu et al. (2022)
	Higher cost of sustainable raw materials	Mukendi, Davies, Glozer & McDonagh (2020)
	Pricing strategy for organizations	Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir (2019)
	Higher price for the consumer	Hur and Cassidy (2019); Mukendi et al. (2020); Nistor (2019); Öztürk and Engizek (2017); Yang et al. (2017)
Material barrier	Limited Design options and more complex patterns	Mukendi, Davies, Glozer, and McDonagh (2020)
	Shortage, difficulty in finding, and undersupply of sustainable raw materials	De Jesus and Mendonça (2018); Gardas et al. (2018); Gadde and Jonsson (2019); Ma et al. (2018); Raut et al. (2019); Shirvanimoghaddam et al. (2020)
Sustainable packaging and human resources	Lack of sustainable specialists	Chowdhury et al. (2018); Govindan and Hasanagic (2018); Xiao et al. (2018)
	Cost of eco-friendly packaging	Batista et al. (2019); Majumdar and Sinha (2018); Moktadir et al. (2018)
	Knowledge-sharing difficulties between specialists	Mukendi, Davies, Glozer, and McDonagh (2020)

Source: own processing

Research methodology

As Khaldi (2017) states, research is the acquisition of knowledge in a systematic and organized way. A scientific methodology is an indispensable tool for knowledge of the methods used in elaborating scientific papers, and the scientific methodology offers the necessary instruments for research elaboration (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). The Grounded Theory was first enounced in 1967 in the text The Discovery of the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 239). The mentioned research model is considered one of the most successful methods that have been developed, though, over the years, and the reason why we chose it. The theory went through different variations and generations, including the Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015; Mey & Mruck, 2011). The code-oriented Grounded Theory was later enounced in 1998, which mainly emphasizes that data can be categorized and condensed in codes and codes further in categories to generate a theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Our objectives will be to validate the sustainability barriers identified internationally in the Romanian market and to identify potential drivers and motivators for overcoming sustainability barriers in the Romanian fast fashion industry. We chose a qualitative approach to be able to understand in depth the potential drivers and motivators for overcoming sustainability barriers in Romania as also to identify those barriers and validate them accordingly.

The research instrument is the semi-structured interview, which combines predefined questions with the freedom to explore specific topics in greater depth (Queirós et al., 2017). This instrument provides a deeper understanding of the organisational barriers hindering the transition to a more sustainable future, and the collected data will be further analysed using NVivo. The interview design will include limited questions, and a research guide will be developed on the following pages. The interview was divided into three main parts: general information about the company, identified/perceived barriers, and motivators/drivers to overcome those barriers. The model was built step by step on the qualitative data (Table 2).

Table 2. Research questions

Objective	Research questions
To validate the sustainability barriers identified internationally in the Romanian market.	What are the organizational barriers to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry in Romania?
To identify potential drivers and motivators for overcoming sustainability barriers in the Romanian fast fashion industry.	From a specialist's point of view, what motivators/drivers can help overcome organizational barriers?

Source: own processing

Sampling

Next, we defined the criteria we used while sampling our respondents; our respondents were either working in a fashion company and had some experience with sustainability, or they were environmental consultants or specialists in the fast fashion industry or in general with sustainability. The respondents were managers/owners or specialists in their work field and part of Romanian or international companies also presented in the table below. We had 10 respondents 6 of them working in the fast fashion industry as to be shown and 4 as environmental specialists which was harder to find as fashion sustainability is still a developing expertise of interest in the fast fashion in Romania as regulations are not yet applied (Table 3). The results are not impacted as no big differences were seen between the two groups of interest and the information started being repeated.

Criteria
A. To work in a fashion company and have sustainability actions to implement or execute
B. Be an environmental consultant or specialist
C. In the moment of research to be a manager/ owner or specialist in the field
D. To be part of an international company
E. To be part of a Romanian Company

Interviewees

Table 3. Sample description

I nr.	Gender /Age	Working as environmental specialists	Working as fashion employees	Criteria	Characteristics
I1	M/28	-	Yes, I am the director of an online fast-fashion store	A, E, C	Small fast fashion company
I2	F/35	-	Yes, sustainability director	A, C, D	Big International fast fashion company
I3	F/36	-	Yes, CSR and performance specialist	A, C, D	Big International fast fashion company
I4	F/30	-	Yes, Store manager	A, C, D	Big International fast fashion company
I5	F/46	-	Yes, trainer and CSR Specialist	A, C, D	Big International fast fashion company
I6	F/56	-	Yes, owner	A, C, E	Small fashion company
I7	M/64	Environmental Consultant for different business	-	B	Member of the European Environmental funding sector
I8	F/61	Environmental Consultant for different businesses,	-	B	Romanian Textile Association
I9	F/38	Environmental Consultant for different business	-	B	Autorizatiademediu .ro and environmental consulting projects
I10	F/45	Environmental Consultant for different businesses,	-	B	Works on environmental projects independently

Source: own processing

Our sample was composed of 10 participants, both men and women, of different ages, 4 being environmental specialists and six working in the fast fashion industry. Three respondents were working in small Romanian companies, four in big international companies, and the rest of the three had experience with both types of companies. Some companies they worked for were Zara, Hervis, H&M, Borntobe, Remesh, Deichmann, environmental consulting agencies, European environmental funding sector members, and the Romanian Textile Association. At the moment of the interview, they were either managers, consultants, owners, or specialists. All details of the respondents will be presented in the tables above.

Results and discussions

Organisational barriers

Table 4 provides a comprehensive look at the organisational barriers found in the Literature Review that were validated in the Romanian market as well as the new dimensions and the newly found barriers. The interview was built based on these barrier dimensions and specific barriers (found in Table 4) and the validation of them on the Romanian market as well as motivators to address these barriers. After collecting the data and coding the barriers in NVivo we managed to identify the barriers in the Romanian market as well as new barriers and the data will be further displayed. The potential motivators to address those barriers were also coded and will be further presented.

Table 4. Romanian organisational barriers

Barrier dimension from structured literature review	Specific barriers from structured literature review	Validated yes/no	Specific barrier validated from qualitative analysis	New barriers
Management, government, and infrastructure The theme was divided into two different themes after the analysis: Management and government and infrastructure	Limited support from governmental and non-governmental authorities to address the issue.	Yes	Lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure	Lack of sponsorships
				The absence of regulations
	Insufficient management engagement	Yes	Lack of engagement – Theme Management and the government were treated separately.	Lack of human resources and training regarding organisational employees and managers
	Lack of awareness coming from organisations in understanding what sustainable fashion means and how it might be achieved.	No	The fashion employees and consultants were aware of the meaning of sustainability.	
	Lack of desire to adapt and transition.	No	The fashion employees and consultants were more than happy to adapt, but the financial barriers were perceived as obstacles.	
	Inadequate existing infrastructure for utilisation, reprocessing materials, and fabric	Yes	The absence of infrastructure	
	Perceived trade-offs of sustainability with other design criteria, such as	Yes	The trade-off with profit specifically, was perceived as a Financial Barrier Dimension and discussed there.	

	cost, design, and fashion trends			
Supplier barrier	Weak partnerships between stakeholders and questionable commitment	Yes	No partnerships	
	Lack of training and reward system for developing sustainable behaviour	Yes, partially	The absence of a reward system	
	Problematic communication regarding suppliers' sustainable behaviours to the consumers	No	The participants thought that was not an issue.	
Financial barrier	Higher cost of investment in innovative technologies and raw materials and uncertainty when talking about the return on investment	Yes, partially	The price of manufacturing sustainable fashion items	Lack of funds to pay specialists
	Higher cost of sustainable raw materials	Yes	The price of raw materials	The price of recycled packaging
	Pricing strategy for organisations	Yes	The price of the final product	Barriers were treated independently as the previously mentioned barrier was general and not specific enough.
			Rental Cost	
			The price of recycling	
			Transportation cost	
	Higher price for the consumer	Yes	The price of the final product	Trade off with profit
Material barrier	Limited Design options and more complex patterns	No	Participants found that if there are financial resources nowadays, it is easy to provide them.	
	Shortage, difficulty in finding, and undersupply of sustainable raw materials	No		
Sustainable packaging and human resources	Lack of sustainable specialists	Yes	Moved to management theme issues as participants perceived	
	Cost of eco-friendly packaging	Yes	Difficult to find	Difficult to find
			Higher price	Higher price
	Knowledge-sharing difficulties between specialists	No	Participants found that there are enough events in Romania for specialists to share knowledge.	

Source: own processing

Firstly, we ran a world count analysis, which showed us a general direction; some of the most frequently used words were cost, materials, infrastructure, packaging, government, recycling, durability, and price.

The barriers from the literature review have been validated through the qualitative study. The first dimension, first found in the literature review, was Management, Government, and Infrastructure. We noticed its scope was too broad and divided into two different themes after analysis: Insufficient Management Engagement and the absence of Government support and Infrastructure. The specific barrier of limited support from governmental and non-governmental authorities to address the issue has been validated, indicating a lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure for sustainable fashion initiatives; therefore, the barrier name was slightly adapted. The barrier of insufficient management engagement has also been validated, highlighting a lack of engagement from fashion industry management in implementing sustainable practices.

The findings from the structured literature review confirm the existence of barriers to sustainable fashion adoption, particularly in the dimensions of management, government, and infrastructure. The lack of awareness among organizations in understanding what sustainable fashion means and the lack of desire to adapt and transition were not validated, as respondents knew the meaning of sustainability but were focusing their strategic approach more on the environmental pillar rather than the other two, social and economic. Also, they were justifying that the financial situation and difficulties of a non-existent environmentally friendly infrastructure in the Romanian market impeded moving forward and being more sustainable, as they had sustainable interests and knowledge.

Although there are social actions and volunteering for their companies and donating to underprivileged groups of people, the environmental actions they tried to start came with a big cost, and they were nearly impossible to implement. Therefore, another specific barrier validated was the Trade-off between profit specifically and the absence of infrastructure. There were also some new barriers identified, such as the Lack of sponsorships, The absence of regulations, and The Lack of human resources and training for organizational employees and managers.

The second dimension was the Supplier barrier, with specific barriers including Weak partnerships between stakeholders and questionable commitment. These were validated under the 'no partnerships' barriers, along with the lack of training and reward system for developing sustainable behaviour, perceived as the absence of a reward system. Problematic communication regarding suppliers' sustainable behaviours to consumers was not seen as an issue in Romania.

The third dimension was the Financial barrier, encompassing all previously mentioned barriers: The price of manufacturing sustainable fashion items, the price of raw materials, and the price of the final product. New barriers such as Lack of funds to pay specialists and the price of recycled packaging were also identified. The initial barriers were not specific enough; therefore, they were treated independently, as seen in the table above.

The fourth dimension was the Material barrier, where no specific barriers were validated from the structured literature review. Participants found that if there are financial resources nowadays, it is easy to provide sustainable materials, and the design options are not limited.

The last theme was Sustainable packaging and human resources, divided into two parts: sustainable packaging and the human resources part, treated under the insufficient management engagement sections dimension. The lack of a specialist barrier was validated. The other barrier, the Cost of eco-friendly packaging, was

divided into two: Difficult to find and Higher price under the sustainable packaging dimension. The barrier of Knowledge-sharing difficulties between specialists was not validated, as it was perceived that there were enough events and opportunities for specialists to talk and exchange opinions.

For our first research question, which was ''What are the barriers to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry in Romania from an organizational perspective?'', we identified the following themes: Financial barriers, Eco-friendly packaging, Insufficient management engagement, Lack of Romanian government support and infrastructure and the Stakeholder and supplier barriers.

The most approached theme was the financial one, which included the codes of lack of funds to pay specialists, rental cost, the price of manufacturing, the price of raw materials, the price of recycled packaging, the price of recycling itself (Sirilertsuwan et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2022), the price of the final product (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019), transportation cost, and trade-off with profit (GOEL, 2018; Hur & Cassidy, 2019). The cost of recycling was often mentioned. P10 talked about it, stating "A recycled product is more expensive than a normal product, meaning if you can afford to buy a recycled product, you understand its usefulness, and you must understand that it was processed, it received another life, and somehow reality, it was created a second time, it costs even more". However, for both companies and consumers, all these costs were often perceived as impossible to afford without programs, funding, or infrastructure. Also, management engagement was considered not as important, as P2 stated, "Management is profit-oriented, and that is what they have to do".

The second most approached theme was management engagement with the two codes: lack of engagement and lack of human resources and training regarding organizational employees (Khoo, 2019; Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019). P10 mentioned "I think first of all is the training framework, and what types of institutions bring this training, if you do projects or maybe international courses, it assumes that the person in the institution must know English to know that it is about EIB skills and competences, it depends very much on the level of interaction in the company, whether they can afford to invest in this person or prefer a consulting firm, but surely there is a lack of training, a lack of direction and a lack And a lack of, let us say, of the specific infrastructure in the area of sustainability, that each industry has sustainability aspects, they do not need to be translated punctually".

The next theme was the Lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure (Pedersen & Andersen, 2015), which included the absence of infrastructure, regulations, and sponsorships. The most debated fact was the absence of infrastructure in our country, with all participants mentioning none. The last theme was related to stakeholders and supplier barriers with the absence of partnerships and a reward system. Participant P1 mentioned that as long as 'there is no reward system tax cuts, preferential interest loans, etc.', the stakeholders will not see any incentives to address the barriers (Figure 1).
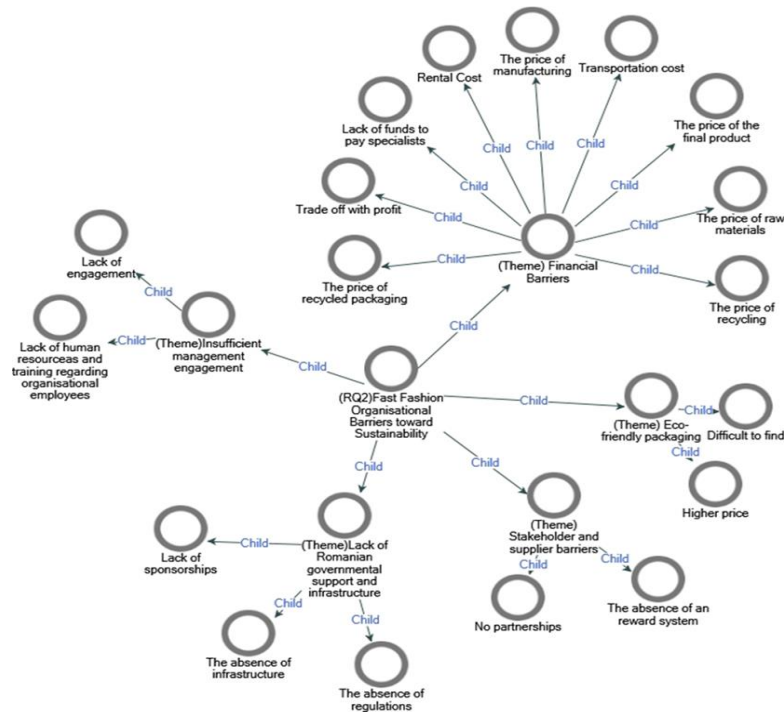
Figure 1. NVivo mapping of the fast fashion organisational barriers
Source: own processing

From our research, we noticed that the most challenging barrier dimension to overcome might be the financial barrier in the Romanian market, which appeared most often, and the most accessible stakeholder's barrier, which will be our second and third hypothèses (Table 5).

Table 5. Fast fashion organisational barriers toward sustainability

Name	References
(RQ2) Fast Fashion Organisational Barriers toward Sustainability	75
(Theme) Eco-friendly packaging	6
Difficult to find	2
Higher price	1
(Theme) Financial barriers	43
Lack of funds to pay specialists	2
Rental Cost	1
The price of manufacturing	3
The price of raw materials	7
The price of recycled packaging	5
The price of recycling	8
The price of the final product	4
Trade off with profit	4
Transportation cost	2
(Theme) Insufficient management engagement	13
Lack of engagement	1
Lack of human resources and training regarding organisational employees and managers	6
(Theme) Lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure	8
Lack of sponsorships	0
The absence of infrastructure	5
The absence of regulations	2
(Theme) Stakeholder and supplier barriers	5
No partnerships	2
The absence of a reward system	3

Source: own processing

Drivers

The last research question aimed to identify motivators from the organizational point of view. The following themes were identified: CSR actions, stakeholders' motivation, and motivations from the EU and governments.

The first identified theme and most mentioned was 'Motivators from EU and government', which included the following codes: No taxes, Programs from the government and EU, The implementation of mandatory regulations, and the creation of infrastructure. All respondents mentioned a call to action from the government and the European Union. For example, P4 mentioned, 'It will come from the government, and I think it will come from the European Union to implement some programs that will then become habits.' Alternatively, P8 mentioned, 'And it is clear that if it is said that the textile waste directive will be in 2025, what is heard will have to be transposed next year, even if it will be put at the national level within a year from when the directive is given at European level.' P2 also spoke about the possibility of creating a separate collection option: 'One option would be to make a kind of separate collection infrastructure for textile waste that did not exist,' or even some tax deduction for a company that is willing to be sustainable, and, of course, funds from the EU, other organizations, and government. P5 added 'We have an environmental fund administration in Romania, which should financially support projects that help avoid environmental pollution, manage packaging waste, and important steps could be taken there. The European Union in PNR has granted huge sums for managing all kinds of construction waste, including waste, textiles, packaging, and so on. It would be quite another for the Environmental Fund Administration to develop programs, and the entrepreneur access funds, and to take steps in this area'.

The second theme was CSR actions, which consisted of Campaigns to inform consumers, Donations, and Employees training and education. P7 mentioned, 'Well, I do not know, maybe there should be an avalanche of commercials, of campaigns that somehow induce us in a culture that we must protect the environment and that we must take better care of the place where we live.' P2 spoke about the need for 'The second would be to allow any sponsorship contract from companies for clothes/unsold items, without any barrier,' and P1 stated, 'It is essential that both employees of a company and consumers are trained in sustainability,' among others.

The last theme was linked to Stakeholders' motivation, which included better collaboration with the distribution locations and a financial reward system for stakeholders. P3 mentioned that 'in the light bulb household appliance industry, in such a way that when purchasing a new product, an old product is taken over with its compensation for stakeholders' (Table 6 and Figure 2).

Table 6. Motivators toward organisational barriers

| Name	References
(RQ6) Motivators toward organisational barriers	44
(Theme) CSR actions	12
Campaigns to inform consumers	9
Donations	1
Employees training and education	2
(Theme) Motivators from EU and Government	18
No taxes	1
Programs from the government and EU	4
The implementation of mandatory regulations	9
To create an infrastructure	4
(Theme) Stakeholders motivation	14
Better collaboration with the distribution locations	2
Financial reward system for stakeholders	12

Source: own processing
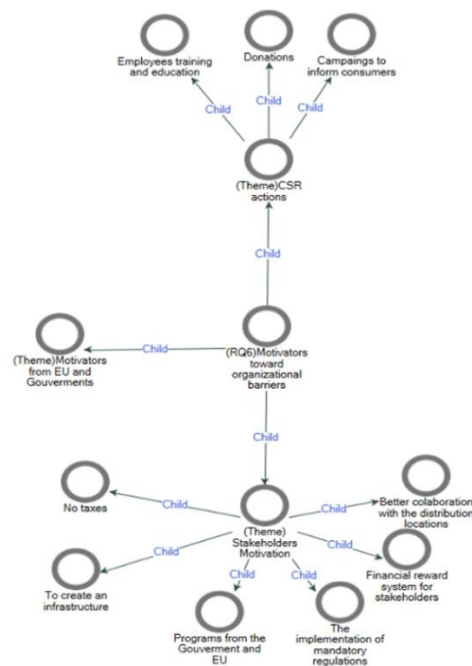
Figure 2. NVivo mapping of organisational Motivators
Source: own processing

The study revealed that the most efficient drivers for organisations to implement sustainable practices are non-governmental and Governmental Programs, which will be our fifth hypothesis presented in the next section.

Conclusions

The research contribution lies in mapping the organizational barriers in Romania and the potential drivers to address these barriers. The complexity of interdependencies within the fast fashion industry, spanning multiple sectors such as textile production, retail logistics, and consumer behaviour, poses a challenge. Given the vastness of the fast fashion industry and the multitude of sustainability barriers, the research had to focus on organizational aspects. It is important to note that no existing research instruments were found, necessitating the creation of new instruments, and the limited availability of research papers on the subject in Romania attests to the authenticity of the research.

The value of the paper lies in the linking of the international global barriers to the Romanian market barriers to highlight the differences and potential motivators to address them. Certainly, addressing the potential consequences of the inaction and the general level of commitment of Romania's enterprises is a burning need as the legal environment will soon make these actions mandatory and the companies should prepare in advance their strategic environmental approach which makes this paper very valuable for the practitioners as also for the theoreticians. Therefore, the implications of the study lays in the need for practitioners to adapt to a needed shift that will be visible in the near future and for theoreticians to create a better understanding of the Romanian Fast Fashion Market sustainability. Moreover, Romania's enterprises have the potential to collaborate with national and international partners and leverage their collective influence to advocate for systemic change within the fashion industry, managing therefore to shift the industry towards a more responsible and equitable future.

The study limitations include the lack of quantitative research to back up the qualitative one, the sample bias, the data availability in Romania, limitations which can be addressed

in future studies. Furthermore, future research could explore the impact of new technologies, the need for greater governmental involvement, and the ever-evolving consumer behaviour in the Romanian fast fashion market. Overall, the research holds the potential to provide valuable insights that inform the decision-making of specialists and aims to inspire action and drive positive change toward a more sustainable future in the fast fashion industry.

In conclusion, the barriers validated in the Romanian market from an organizational point of view, in order from most referenced to least, were: Financial Barriers, Insufficient management engagement, Lack of Romanian governmental support and infrastructure, Eco-friendly packaging, and Stakeholder and supplier barriers. The easiest barrier to overcome seemed to be the stakeholders and supplier barrier. The most associated words describing those barriers were the costs, with financial barriers mentioned the most times. Most motivators addressing these barriers included potential funding from the EU or government; therefore, the hardest barrier dimension to overcome would be the financial barrier in the Romanian market.

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