



# **GARMENT QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: A USER- BASED APPROACH**

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# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

This paper explores the role played by female perceptions of garment quality in relation to how and how long clothing is kept and how it is used. It considers perceptions of quality in relation to implications for sustainability in fashion. The central contributions of this paper are the distinctions it makes between the immediate concepts of clothing quality 'pre-use' to those more gradually developed experiences of quality learnt 'during use'. In use, garments are tied into user practices and as such become woven into the actions and experiences of everyday life. The length of time garments are worn and kept is more closely connected to how quality is experienced subjectively by the user than understood within objective industry-based definitions of quality. In relation to sustainability, this suggests new directions for understanding quality with emphasis on user behaviour.

The research involved two phases of empirical data collection in the UK. The first phase draws on a subset of findings from a 12-month laundry study that surveyed the use and laundering of 32 different garments across a group of 16 women. The second phase comprises a semi-structured interview study with 13 women, focused on factors that influence garment lifetimes. Combining the datasets amassed different types of insights creating a multidimensional perspective on quality.

In addition, this paper includes outputs from a workshop facilitated by the authors as part of the Global Fashion Conference 2018 at the London College of Fashion. Through discussion, reflection, writing and image-making, the 24 participants, were invited to consider how they understand, recognize and enjoy quality through their everyday wear and care of clothing. The workshop provided an opportunity to present initial ideas to peers.

This research is published by the peer-reviewed journal Fashion Practice in late 2019 (Taylor & Francis), which is available in print and online.

# ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role played by female perceptions of garment quality in relation to how long clothing is kept and how it is used. It considers perceptions of quality in relation to implications for sustainability in fashion. The research involves two phases of empirical data collection conducted in the UK. The first phase draws on a subset of findings from a 12-month laundry study that surveyed the use and laundering of 32 different garments across a group of 16 women. The second phase comprises a semi-structured interview study with 13 women and focuses on exploring factors that influence garment lifetimes. The central contributions of this paper are the distinctions it makes between the immediate concepts of clothing quality that are understood as “pre-use” to those more gradually developed experiences of quality learnt “during use.” In use, garments are tied into user practices and as such become woven into the actions and experiences of everyday life. The length of time garments are worn and kept is more closely connected to how quality is experienced subjectively by the user than understood within objective industry-based definitions of quality. In relation to sustainability, this suggests new directions for understanding quality with emphasis on user behavior.

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