

Research Article

# Dopamine and Endorphins: A Study of Speed in Fashion as a Mechanism of Desire

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## Abstract

This study delves into the contrasting mechanisms of fast fashion and slow fashion, examining how they operate as expressions of human desire driven by distinct neurological and philosophical underpinnings. Fast fashion, fueled by rapid production cycles and the influence of technology and capital, leverages dopamine-driven mechanisms to provide instant gratification. This model aligns with the short-term reward system, reinforcing consumer behaviors that lead to continuous purchases and cyclical consumption. However, this pursuit often results in environmental degradation, resource overuse, and psychological exhaustion among consumers. In contrast, slow fashion embodies a counter-narrative that emphasizes quality, sustainability, and long-term satisfaction, aligning with the endorphin-driven mechanisms. These endorphins, associated with deeper emotional fulfillment and resilience through challenges, promote a reflective, meaningful consumer experience. The philosophical analysis incorporates Schopenhauer's concept of insatiable will, paralleling the endless desire perpetuated by fast fashion, and Nietzsche's idea of the will to power, suggesting slow fashion as a creative and life-affirming response that embraces challenge and meaning. Ultimately, the article argues that while both fast and slow fashion engage human desire mechanisms, their impacts differ vastly in terms of sustainability, psychological well-being, and existential fulfillment. The study calls for a broader exploration of how technology, culture, and ethical considerations can reshape fashion consumption toward more sustainable and emotionally satisfying practices.

## Keywords

Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion, Will to Live, Dopamine, Endorphin

## 1. Introduction

The contemporary fashion industry is heavily driven by globalisation, capital and technology. Driven by the culture of fast consumption, fast fashion has become an important part of consumers' lives around the world. Through capital investment and technological advances, fast fashion brands have been able to shorten their production cycle and launch a large number of new products quickly at low cost to meet the

instantaneous demands of the market. This consumption pattern not only changes people's purchasing behaviour, but also reinforces the role of symbolic consumption and identity expression at the social level. However, the immediacy and short-term reward mechanism of fast fashion has also brought about many problems, including resource waste, environmental pollution, and consumer fatigue and a sense

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of meaning lessness. These phenomena have prompted academics and fashion industry practitioners to focus on slow fashion, which is the polar opposite of fast fashion. Emphasising long-term satisfaction, product quality, emotional connection, and sustainability, the goal of slow fashion is not only to extend the life cycle of products, but also to revisit the fast-paced and short-term consumption culture of modern society through the design and consumption process.

Against this background, this study delves into the issue of fast and slow fashion from both biological and philosophical perspectives, attempting to analyse the effects of fast and slow fashion on individuals through the two neurotransmitter mechanisms of dopamine and endorphins. Biologically, dopamine is associated with instant gratification and pleasure, whereas endorphins are linked to long-term gratification and emotional connection. The comparison of these two neural mechanisms allows for a deeper understanding of the core differences between the two fashion patterns. Meanwhile, combining Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's theories of the will, this study aims to reveal the philosophical connotations behind the issue of fashion speed, so as to provide new theoretical perspectives and critical thinking paths for the contemporary fashion consumption culture.

## 2. Capital and Technology-led Fashion Acceleration

### 2.1. The Dominant Forces of Capital and Technology in the Fashion Industry

The development of the modern fashion industry is undoubtedly closely linked to the rapid progress of capital and technology. In the process of globalisation, the combination of capital and technology not only promotes production and consumption on a global scale, but also accelerates the innovation and dissemination of fashion. The penetration of the logic of capital in the fashion industry pushes enterprises to pursue profit maximisation and quickly capture the market by reducing production costs and shortening production cycles (Harvey, 1990). Fast fashion, as a concentrated manifestation of this logic, has succeeded in meeting the instantaneous demand for fashion by global consumers through the rapid turnover of large quantities of low-priced garments, a process that has been critically underpinned by technological advances.

Technological innovation, especially the rapid development of information technology and manufacturing technology, has led to a qualitative leap in all aspects of the fashion industry from design, production to distribution. Firstly, the popularity of digital design tools has enabled designers to complete creative designs more quickly and achieve seamless global collaboration [1]. Secondly, the introduction of intelligent manufacturing and large-scale automated production technologies has enabled fashion companies to respond

quickly to market demand and shorten production cycles. This on-demand production mode is particularly prominent in fast fashion, where brands are able to adjust production in real time according to consumer demand, achieving refined cost control and optimal allocation of resources [2].

Capital and technology have not only accelerated the production chain, but also dramatically reshaped consumer behaviour. The widespread use of the Internet, especially e-commerce and social media, has changed the traditional path of fashion communication. Whereas in the past, fashion was an elite minority culture conveyed through luxury brands and authoritative fashion media, today it has become an instant consumer product within the reach of every consumer [1]. Capital has created ubiquitous consumption scenarios by linking digital platforms with social media, and brands are using technological tools such as algorithmic recommendations and precision marketing to further enhance consumer engagement and desire to consume. Fast-fashion brands such as Zara and H&M are using technological tools to accurately analyse the market and capture consumer preferences, so that they can launch new products that cater to the market's needs in the shortest possible time [3].

### 2.2. Influence of Capital and Technology on Individual Consumption Desire

The role of capital and technology in the fashion industry is not only to promote production and distribution, but also to influence individual consumption patterns and stimulate their desire mechanisms on a deeper level. In this process, consumers are no longer just recipients of products, but gradually become an important link in the consumption chain. Capital creates a brand-new consumption environment through technological means, which accelerates and strengthens the individual's desire.

Firstly, fast fashion brands have created a culture of instant consumption through technology, where consumers are constantly exposed to new fashion information on social media and can get the latest products without waiting. This immediacy and thrill of consumption is in line with the mechanism of dopamine-driven desire. Dopamine is responsible for the functioning of the reward and motivation system in the brain, and when an individual obtains instant gratification through a purchase, dopamine levels rise, resulting in a short-lived feeling of pleasure [4]. By creating ever-changing trends, fast fashion brands create a sense of urgency for consumers to 'seize the moment', inducing them to keep pursuing this transient satisfaction, which is the desired pattern of consumption by capital - to keep buying and never stop. This behaviour is exactly what capital expects from consumers - to keep buying and never stop.

Secondly, the acceleration of fashion driven by technology is not only affecting individual desires, but is also gradually symbolising fashion consumption. As Baudrillard points out, fashion has become a symbol of social capital and status,

with individuals constructing and expressing their social identities through the purchase and display of certain brands of clothing. Technology has enabled this symbolisation to spread more quickly and widely, with social media users reinforcing the proliferation of fashion symbols in the digital space by sharing photos of outfits, likes and comments. By introducing a large number of low-cost trendy items, fast fashion brands have enabled consumers to enter the realm of symbolic consumption at a much lower economic cost, thus stimulating more desire generation.

Under the joint action of capital and technology, the mechanism of consumer desire has changed from the previous functional demand to an ongoing symbolic consumption, where consumers are no longer satisfied with the possession of goods, but are more concerned with expressing themselves, obtaining social recognition and identity belonging through fashion symbols. In this process, fast fashion brands act as symbolic producers, creating new consumption scenarios through technological means and inducing consumers to enter the cycle of desire.

### **2.3. Consequences of Accelerated Desire: Fast Fashion and Slow Fashion**

The acceleration of desire fuelled by capital and technology has brought huge economic benefits to the fashion industry in the short term, but it has also led to a series of social and environmental problems. By constantly accelerating production and consumption, the fast fashion model has caused excessive consumption of resources and serious pollution of the environment [5]. In addition, individuals often fall into consumption fatigue in this acceleration of desire, as dopamine-driven pleasure is short-lived and unsustainable. Consumers tend to feel more empty and dissatisfied after experiencing transient gratification, and thus move on to seek the next consumption goal [6], which perhaps leads to an even more serious crisis of meaninglessness. In contrast, slow fashion promotes a mode of consumption based on long-term satisfaction, which attempts to resist the acceleration of consumption brought about by capital and technology through high-quality, sustainable products and more in-depth consumption experiences. This model emphasises the emotional connection between the consumer and the product. In contrast to fast fashion, which constantly teases people with dopamine, slow fashion seeks to replace the transient pleasure of fast fashion with the lasting satisfaction brought about by the endorphin mechanism [7]. Slow fashion is not only a change in consumption pattern, but also a cultural practice to fight against the acceleration of desire, which reflects consumers' vigilance and reflection on the contemporary ever-accelerating dopamine fashion.

## **3. Mechanisms of Desire from a Biological Perspective: Dopamine Fashions VS. Endorphin Fashions**

### **3.1. Biological Basis of Desire Mechanisms**

Desire, as a driver of human behaviour, is deeply rooted in biological foundations. Dopamine and endorphins are two important neurotransmitters in the brain associated with desire and pleasure, which influence an individual's short-term and long-term satisfaction, respectively. Dopamine dominates the fast reward mechanism and is commonly associated with immediate pleasure, motivational reinforcement, and short-term desire satisfaction [6]. Endorphins, on the other hand, are associated with long-term gratification and intrinsic pleasure, providing a sense of sustained satisfaction and helping individuals to resist the anxiety and dissatisfaction associated with transient desires [6]. From a biological perspective, these two neurotransmitter mechanisms directly influence an individual's consumption behaviour and play an important role in the consumption patterns of fast fashion and slow fashion respectively.

The dopamine system plays a central role in the consumption pattern of fast fashion. The release of dopamine provides consumers with a short-lived sense of pleasure and accomplishment when purchasing new clothing [4]. This pleasure is short-lived and immediate, driving individuals to continually pursue new fashion products to maintain the thrill. This cyclical consumer behaviour is not only consistent with the needs of capital, but also reflects the profound impact of a technology-driven culture of rapid consumption on biological mechanisms.

In the slow fashion model, the endorphin mechanism is even more pronounced. Endorphins are endogenous analgesics that provide lasting satisfaction and help individuals resist external stress [8]. Slow fashion brands provide consumers with a deep emotional connection and satisfaction through high quality, sustainable and personalised products that are purchased and used. This long-term satisfaction coincides with the release of endorphins, whereby consumers gain inner peace and fulfilment through the appreciation and use of the product, thus counteracting the dopamine-driven acceleration of desire.

### **3.2. Fast Fashion and the Dopamine Mechanism: Instant Satisfaction of Desire**

The essential feature of fast fashion is to provide high-frequency product updates and low-cost consumption experience based on the advantages of capital and technology. The core of this model lies in immediacy, which satisfies consumers' instant desire for fashion by continuously creating consumption impulses. Biologically, the release of dopamine triggers instant pleasure when an individual obtains

the fulfilment of his or her desire through the consumption of fast fashion products. Because they offer low-priced but attractive fashion products, consumers are able to obtain satisfaction easily and quickly, a rewarding behaviour that repeatedly stimulates dopamine secretion. This pleasure not only reinforces the purchasing behaviour, but also prompts consumers to link the shopping behaviour to the pleasure experience, thus creating a rapid feedback loop [9], whereby consumers continue to make repeated purchases in pursuit of this quick and instant pleasure experience.

Dopamine not only plays a role in immediate rewards, but also drives individuals to generate expectations of future rewards. Fast fashion operates precisely through the rapid iteration of new products, which allows consumers to continuously generate expectations of future fashion. In this process, individuals are not merely attracted to the products they have already purchased, but through the anticipation of future fashion trends, the dopamine system is further energised, driving consumers to mentally prepare for their next purchase [10]. This explains why consumers of fast fashion brands are always eager to acquire the next new product, and this desire-driven mechanism is a direct reflection of the nature of the interaction between the 'timeliness' of fast fashion and the immediacy of the dopamine system. From the perspective of individual rationality, the dopamine-driven individual expectation directly affects the human learning mechanism. When an individual consumes a fast fashion product, the dopamine system remembers the causal relationship between the behaviour and the reward, and motivates the individual to continue to choose similar behaviours in the future. The reward learning mechanism implies that consumers gradually solidify their purchasing behaviour as a habit by experiencing the transient pleasure of fast fashion multiple times [9]. Thus, fast fashion is not just a mere consumption behaviour, it is also a dopamine-enhanced habitual consumption pattern that drives consumers to enter the fast fashion consumption cycle so frequently that it is difficult to get out of it. The irrational aspect is even more of a dopamine-driven 'comfort zone', where fluctuations in dopamine levels are closely related to impulsive behaviour. Dopamine plays a central role in fast fashion's ability to stimulate consumers to make immediate purchase decisions by encouraging them to choose options that offer immediate rewards, while ignoring long-term environmental or economic consequences [4]. This is a good explanation of why fast fashion is able to induce consumers to make impulsive purchases through fast-changing trends and pricing strategies, even if the individual does not really need the goods.

Obviously, such a dopamine-driven desire mechanism can easily fall into a vicious circle. Since the pleasure effect of dopamine is short-lived, consumers will soon feel lost and develop new desires after experiencing the pleasure brought by shopping. This cycle of constantly pursuing new stimuli is the core driving force behind fast fashion's ability to maintain a high level of consumer reliance. Through frequent new

arrivals and low-pricing strategies, fast fashion brands continue to provide dopamine-type pleasure triggers, enticing consumers to consume again after a brief period of satisfaction. This cycle not only intensifies individual consumption dependence, but also reinforces the fashion industry's accelerated production and renewal [7], perpetuating a vicious cycle of desire and consumption.

### 3.3. Slow Fashion and the Endorphin Mechanism: Pain and Pleasure

Unlike the dopamine-driven instant gratification desire mechanism of fast fashion, although slow fashion is also a type of desire mechanism, it emphasises long-term gratification and emotional connection, which, from a biological point of view, can be explained by the role of endorphins. Endorphins are neurotransmitters that produce a feeling of pleasure in the body, but what makes them special is that their production requires pain in the body, which is aptly described as 'pain and pleasure'. It acts as an analgesic, helping people to ignore the physical pain of doing challenging tasks, which is where the post-exercise pleasure often comes from. If dopamine is more of a pleasure, endorphins are more akin to a meaningful sense of achievement after all the pain, depression and endurance. Contemporary fashion is dominated by capital and technology, and as a product of this, fast fashion perfectly fits the accelerated demand of capital and technology, constantly stimulating people's dopamine secretion, which is a kind of smooth, painless fashion that requires no reflection. It is a smooth, painless and non-reflective fashion. Obviously, slow fashion can't completely get rid of the influence of capital and technology, but nevertheless, it has chosen a more 'difficult' and rebellious path. For the public, slow fashion is a strange other, it is not only a mode to fight against fast fashion, but also an experience that inspires individuals to face higher challenges. Endorphins come into play when individuals step away from the instant gratification brought by fast fashion and choose the disturbing, shocking and even painful slow fashion. Unlike the short-lived pleasure brought by dopamine, endorphins need to be released in the process of endurance and stress, which helps us endure the pain brought by the slow fashion as the other, which may be material discomfort or conceptual shock, and after the pain is over, it will bring a more lasting and meaningful satisfaction.

The heterogeneity of slow fashion makes it more than a simple replacement for fast fashion, but a generative self-reflection with diverse meanings. By encouraging people to slow down, revisit the multiple possibilities in life, and be wary of the violence of the same, this form of fashion, when individuals are forced to slow down to try to face more of the other and to experience the multiple mobilities of the present moment in detail, the release of endorphins in the process helps them to gain a richer understanding of the possibilities of life, which is in stark contrast to the transient



pleasure that is induced by fast fashion through the mechanism of dopamine. In the practice of slow fashion, individuals are freed from a culture that constantly seeks novelty and excitement, and instead focus on the complexity and diversity that have been neglected, thus achieving more long-lasting psychological satisfaction. Slow fashion does not reject the past or the future, but sees it as a rich connection to the present. It is a place that accommodates multiple streams of events, allowing different dimensions of time to intersect in the present. This multiple understanding of time is similar to the long-lasting regulatory mechanism of endorphins on emotions. Endorphins help individuals to maintain emotional balance and stability in this interweaving of time, thus avoiding the anxiety and insecurity associated with fast fashion, which comes largely from an illusion of progress, where 'non-progress' is often seen as immoral and shameful. Slow fashion, however, through its critical and historical attitude, guides us to reflect on and criticise this obviously false myth of 'progress', and helps people to free themselves from a state of not being able to find a place for themselves. And try to explore new and diversified possibilities, through the slow fashion of looking back in time and looking forward to the future, individuals not only gain emotional comfort in the present, but also gain a deeper sense of satisfaction from reflecting on past memories and looking forward to the future. Endorphins can help individuals gain sustained psychological pleasure and satisfaction during difficult and painful long-term critical thinking and practice. As individuals explore and question established frameworks of meaning in the course of slow fashion, the long-term pleasure brought by endorphins helps them to combat the sense of emptiness brought about by consumerism. Thus, slow fashion attempts to challenge the established framework of meaning in an attempt to challenge the ultimate problem of the emptiness of meaning in contemporary fashion and even in contemporary social life. It no longer sees fashion as a mere tool to satisfy superficial desires, but as a transcendent and generative medium. In this process of transcending the established framework, endorphins help individuals experience fashion from a more far-reaching perspective, forming a psychological mechanism to fight against meaningless consumption. Slow fashion brings not only external fashion enjoyment, but also a kind of spiritual liberation, prompting individuals to get out of the anxiety of consumerism and rediscover the multiple meanings behind fashion. Through the continuous regulation of endorphins, individuals gain the inner strength to fight against nothingness in the practice of slow fashion, and feel long-lasting psychological balance and satisfaction in this process.

Therefore, slow fashion not only focuses on the richness of the present, but also actively explores the diverse possibilities of the future. It offers multiple possibilities for the future in a generative way, helping individuals to liberate themselves from a fixed, linear view of time and gain imagination and anticipation for the future. This openness to the

future resonates with the constant moderating effects of endorphins, helping individuals to gain a constant expectation of the future and a sense of fulfilment in the practice of slow fashion. Through the constant generation of diversity and heterogeneity, endorphins sustain the individual's long-lasting pleasure in this process, making slow fashion a spiritual and emotional practice that goes beyond fashion itself.

### 3.4. Summary

Through the analogy of dopamine and endorphin neurotransmitters, it can be seen that fast and slow fashion are not completely dichotomous, but belong to the same two parts of the desire mechanism, for both fast and slow fashion participation can provide people with pleasure and thus gain meaning. However, the difference lies in the fact that fast fashion is driven by dopamine, providing short-lived pleasure, forming a do-more reward mechanism of instant gratification and desire cycle or also called accelerated seduction mechanism driven by technology and capital, which accelerates the development of the fashion industry, but also brings serious environmental problems and individual consumption fatigue [5]. Slow fashion, on the other hand, is endorphin-driven, helping people to bravely face the hardship and pain caused by unfamiliar others, providing more long-term and stable satisfaction and sense of achievement in the process, and attempting to find the meaning of life through the positive exploration of future diversity, which is a kind of positive resistance to the infinite expansion of emptiness and desire.

## 4. Schopenhauer's Theory of the Will and Fashion's Speed Problem Conversion

### 4.1. The Core of Schopenhauer's Theory of the Will: Endless Desire and Suffering

In fact, more than 100 years before the official discovery of dopamine (1957) and endorphins (1975), the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer made a very similar discussion in his masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation*. The core of his philosophical system lies in his revelation of the will, and his theory of the will is derived from German conceptualism, especially the philosophical ideas of Kant and Fichte. His core idea: 'The world is a manifestation of the will' is based on Kant's concept of the 'thing-in-itself', and further proposes that the thing-in-itself is the 'will'. His core idea that 'the world is a manifestation of the will' builds on Kant's concept of the 'thing-in-itself' and further suggests that the thing-in-itself is essentially a blind, irrational 'will'. He believed that the will is the inner force that drives all existence and governs the operation of the individual, nature and the universe. At the same time, Schopenhauer also drew on

Fichte's theory of 'self'. According to Fichte, human action is an expression of the self, and this self activity constructs reality. Schopenhauer borrowed this idea and expanded it to a more generalised volitional drive, whereby the world is driven by unconscious, blind forces of the will, and not merely by the activity of self-consciousness. In addition to this, he drew inspiration from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, especially the ideas of 'desire' and 'suffering'. He derived a deep understanding of desire and suffering from the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, and incorporated this pessimism into his philosophy, arguing that the essence of life is endless desire, and that suffering is the inevitable result of such desire. Against this theoretical background, Schopenhauer condensed his theory of the will, which states that the essence of the world is an unconscious, irrational will that drives the behaviour and desires of all living beings, and that it is from this ceaseless desire that all the pains and disturbances of an individual's life originate [11]. According to Schopenhauer, the essence of life is an unending desire, i. e. human beings immediately generate new desires after they have been satisfied, and this state of unfulfillment puts one in a state of constant suffering. He further states that the will is a blind and unending force that dominates the individual's material pursuits and desire for survival, especially in the most basic survival needs such as appetite, sexuality and self-preservation [12]. In this respect, the consumer behaviour of fashion bears a striking resemblance to Schopenhauer's theory of the will: consumers satisfy their inner desires by continually purchasing new fashion items, but this satisfaction is short-lived, and is followed by even more intense and uncontrollable desires. This cycle of insatiable consumption embodies the unstoppable operation of the will that Schopenhauer describes. In Schopenhauer's description, this blind and unending will presents an extremely strong correlation with dopamine, and contemporary neuroscience has revealed the complex mechanisms of the human will by studying decision-making and impulse control in the brain. It has been found that will is not just some blind, single force, but is subject to the combined action of multiple systems in the brain. Studies of self-control in modern psychology (such as the work of American psychologist Roy Baumeister) have also explored the notion of volition as a finite resource, echoing Schopenhauer's theory of endless desire, but offering a more refined explanation.

## 4.2. Fast Fashion - Utilising Will-driven Technological Dopamine-Based Desire Mechanisms

The will drives human desires and behaviours, dominating the individual's pursuit of material things. Whether from the perspective of basic survival needs or higher self-realisation or even self-transcendence needs, fashion is the perfect object to be pursued by the will-driven human being. Fast fashion takes advantage of the will's insatiable character, and

with the most advanced technological means, continuously creates objects of desire with 'freshness' at the fastest speed through newer trends, low-priced goods and mass production, in order to satisfy the consumers' needs for novelty and individual expression. However, the ultimate goal of creating such objects of desire is not to satisfy individual desires; on the contrary, the creation of fast fashion garments aims to continuously stimulate the accelerated birth of new individual desires, thus realising the accelerated accumulation of consumer capital. Individual desires are violently squeezed and exploited in the fast fashion mechanism. This never-ending cycle of fast fashion consumption, as Schopenhauer describes the will, is irrational and blind, and fast fashion as a mechanism of desire that constantly seduces and titillates the individual's dopamine secretion through the use of technological fashions as false objects of desire, in order to briefly alleviate feelings of dissatisfaction in the form of a reward [13], which refuses to be thought about in terms of long-term desires for meaning. because this long-term desire will undoubtedly put the brakes on the accumulation of capital in the fashion industry.

With the help of technology and capital, fast fashion has become a mechanism of will-driven technological desire that makes it easy for individuals to get caught up in the pursuit of a false desire, a dopamine-type desire that is deliberately constructed to stimulate accelerated consumption. This model fits directly into Schopenhauer's understanding of the will to live, whereby the individual relieves desire-driven anxiety through the fleeting pleasure of consumption, yet because of the fleeting nature of this pleasure, the consumer is forced to continually awaken the dopamine reward mechanism by constantly purchasing new products in an attempt to fill the emptiness [5] and the individual is thus trapped in an inertial cycle of consumption. Thus fast fashion as a mechanism of desire is essentially an indulgence of the will to live and a submission to endless desire, an artificial mechanism of desire created by capital and technology. The result is the accelerated accumulation of capital through the kidnapping of individual desires and the acceleration of the frequency of fashion updates and purchases through technology. Whether individual desires are truly cared for in this mechanism is not its concern.

## 4.3. Slow Fashion - The Will-driven Mechanism of Artistic Endorphin Desire

For Schopenhauer, the blind and irrational 'will' leads the individual into the endless cycle of desire and thus causes endless suffering, and his solution is to promote the individual to gradually approach the negation of the will through aesthetic experience and ascetic lifestyle, so as to completely get rid of the pain, which is obviously influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism. Hinduism. Despite the extreme pessimism of his theory of the will, it is possible to gain insights into what slow fashion is. However, when discussing slow

fashion, it is undeniable that although it is another possibility that distinguishes it from fast fashion, we cannot discuss it outside the realm of fashion, and therefore slow fashion continues to function as a will-driven mechanism of desire. In Schopenhauer's context, the aesthetic experience brought about by art is non-utilitarian, and can lead the individual into a state of selfless observation, where the individual can transcend the daily state of desire and enter into a state of 'will-less' existence, where the individual is no longer concerned with his or her own needs and desires, and can instead experience the nature of the world purely. In this process, the individual is no longer concerned with the needs and desires of self, but purely experiences the essence of the world. If the aesthetic experience is a kind of temporary liberation, then the ascetic lifestyle further requires the individual to reach a state of complete denial of the will, so as to achieve eternal liberation. It is not difficult to see that the two solutions given by Schopenhauer are both extremely idealised as a complete negation of desire. In this context, it is obviously inappropriate to directly apply Schopenhauer's aesthetic experience and asceticism methodology to the slow fashion as a mechanism of desire.

Nietzsche can be said to be the 'successor and rebel' of Schopenhauer's thought. On the one hand, he was deeply influenced by Schopenhauer's pessimism and theory of will, and on the other hand, he completely subverted Schopenhauer's core idea of will. Nietzsche's criticism of Schopenhauer is firstly and most importantly reflected in the re-interpretation of the nature of the will. Nietzsche put forward his own concept of 'Will to Power' on the basis of Schopenhauer's theory of the will. According to Nietzsche, the will is not only the power of blindly pursuing existence and survival, but also a positive and creative power - it drives individuals to constantly transcend themselves and pursue higher goals. Nietzsche criticised Schopenhauer's theory of the will as being too negative and seeing life as suffering. He believed that the will is not just a source of suffering, but also an expression of life force. Instead of being a force that must be dissolved, the will helps to propel the individual to transcend suffering and create new values and meanings. Therefore, Schopenhauer's negative evaluation of the will and his strategy of trying to escape from the will through aesthetics or abstinence is, in Nietzsche's view, a complete denial of life, a kind of weak and cowardly 'nihilism' [15]. Therefore, Nietzsche proposed the concept of the 'superhuman' (Übermensch), believing that through the 'will to power', human beings can transcend their own limitations and create their own morality and values. Nietzsche's philosophy advocates the affirmation of life, the courage to face pain and uncertainty, and the view of life as a process to be embraced positively. Pain is an inevitable part of life, but it is also a source of personal growth and strength. Nietzsche's famous maxim 'What does not kill me makes me stronger' [16] ('Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker') embodies this idea, and if Schopenhauer's will is more like a dopamine

rush, it is not the same thing. If Schopenhauer's will is more like dopamine, then Nietzsche's will is more like endorphins-helping individuals to transcend pain and thus create value and meaning in their lives. Therefore, in Nietzsche's context of the will, slow fashion as a will-driven endorphin-type desiring mechanism is only understandable and necessary.

Secondly, Nietzsche's view of art was very different from Schopenhauer's. He believed that art was not a means of transcending or escaping the will. Nietzsche believed that art is not a means of transcending or escaping the will, and he believed that the essence of art is closely related to desire and vitality. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche put forward the 'Dionysian spirit' and the 'Apollonian spirit' [17] with the Apollonian spirit standing for order, reason, and form, while the Dionysian spirit stands for ecstasy, chaos, and the primitive impulse of life. According to Nietzsche, true art comes from the Dionysian spirit, which is not an escape from the will, but a celebration of the life force. Art should be a life-affirming affirmation that transcends pain and reason, an active embrace of the pain of existence. Thus, Schopenhauer's promotion of 'aesthetic liberation' was, in Nietzsche's view, a misunderstanding; art should not lead one away from desire and will, but rather allow one to experience and affirm the power of life more deeply. Nietzsche would argue that Schopenhauer's view of art is retiring and life-denying, whereas he himself advocates an art that is full of life and inspires people to embrace all that life has to offer, whether it be pain or pleasure. Schopenhauer's art is the opposite of will and desire, while Nietzsche's art is born out of will and desire. Therefore, slow fashion, as an alternative mechanism of desire to fast fashion, no matter how much it emphasises the unique design, craftsmanship, cultural connotation and concern for sustainability, how much it opposes consumerism, and how much it pursues a more lasting and meaningful emotional and aesthetic experience, in the final analysis, it is still a mechanism of desire that enables an individual to obtain a kind of spiritual pleasure and satisfaction [7], desire mechanism. Therefore, in Schopenhauer's view, slow fashion is still a kind of original sin, and it is only in Nietzsche's theory that its legitimacy can be found, and slow fashion as a kind of artistic fashion that fights against nothingness and is full of vitality has a chance to become possible.

#### 4.4. Summary

Schopenhauer's philosophy hopes to seek liberation through asceticism and the denial of the will, looking for a path of liberation beyond life beyond the will. Fashion, whether fast or slow, is essentially a will-driven mechanism of desire, and in Schopenhauer's context, both need to be repressed, forbidden and ultimately transcended. He gives the other side as a world of art that is completely inde-

pendent of the will. Nietzsche, on the other hand, is adamantly opposed to this attempt to transcend life. He believed that the value of life was in itself, that there was no transcendence, only affirmation, and rejected any utopian escape beyond the essence of life. For Nietzsche, pain was part of life, and the greatness of life lay in the ability to create meaning out of pain. Schopenhauer's attempts to get rid of pain through asceticism and aesthetics actually devalued life and refused to face its true nature. Nietzsche regarded this attitude as nihilistic and a fundamental denial of life. Therefore, the will-driven dopamine-type ever-accelerating cycle of technological fast-fashion desire mechanisms or endorphin-type artistic slow-fashion, regardless of whether they bring desire, temptation, short-lived gratification, or more pain to the individual, their existence provides the energy for the individual's life to be strong and varied, and therefore fashion as a mechanism of desire existence possesses its legitimacy.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has delved into the similarities and differences between fast fashion and slow fashion as mechanisms of desire through the biological mechanisms of two neurotransmitters, dopamine and endorphins. The dual drive of capital and technology has fuelled the accelerated process of fashion, with fast fashion fuelling consumers' desire to make instant purchases through constantly shifting trends and low-cost goods. This process plays a central role in dopamine as an instant reward mechanism, which stimulates consumers to constantly pursue instantaneous pleasure, but can easily lead to consumer fatigue and environmental problems. In addition, from a philosophical perspective, Schopenhauer's theory of the will reveals the endlessness of desire and the nature of pain, which is highly compatible with the consumption cycle of modern fast fashion. On the contrary, slow fashion emphasises long-term satisfaction and emotional connection through the endorphin mechanism. The release of endorphins not only helps individuals cope with the deeper challenges that fast fashion cannot provide, but also brings them a more lasting sense of pleasure. Under this framework, slow fashion is not only a resistance to fast fashion, but also a cultural practice that explores the meaning of time, value and existence through the multiple intertwining of emotions and time. Nietzsche's theory of the will to power also provides further theoretical support for slow fashion, arguing that pain is part of the life force, and fashion is a way for individuals to create meaning out of pain. It can be seen that fast and slow fashion are not completely binary opposites, but rather different manifestations of desire mechanisms. Slow fashion exists in the current consumer society not only as a form of confrontation with fast fashion, but also as a profound reflection and diverse exploration of the meaning of life in contemporary society.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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## Research Fields

**Zhang Yizhou:** aesthetics, speed fashion, fashion design