

Chapter 2

Defeating Global Glut of Clothing: An Examination of Sustainable Fashion Consumption of Young Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the determinants of sustainable fashion consumption among young consumers. The empirical study adopted quantitative methodology using a survey approach for collecting data. The sample of 500 young consumers was collected using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. This study uses five main identified determinants of sustainable fashion consumption: pro-environmental attitude, environmental knowledge, subjective norm, price incentive, perceived behavioural control, and environmental value. The final data of 481 young consumers were analysed using structural equation modeling (SEM). Findings confirm that environmental value acts as a mediator. The input of this study is expected to be a valuable indicator for stakeholders such as the government, fashion designers, retailers, and manufacturers. The study contributes to the scarce literature by recognising the mediating effect of environmental value.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption refers to the attitude and behavior that every youth needs to contribute positively to environmental conservation and guarantee a sustainable future. The youth, who are also future heirs, need to be exposed to sustainable consumption to increase their understanding of the importance of environmental conservation. Excessive clothing waste occurs due to fast fashion changes with a constant trend in new fashion designs (Paço et al., 2021). In the past decade, the rhythm of fashion has accelerated toward the life cycle of fast fashion. The concept is dominated by consumption and fast-changing

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trends. Consumers bought more clothes because of the reasonable prices and threw them away after just one season (Muthu, 2019). Therefore, fast fashion contributes a large amount of the waste disposal the fashion industry produces (Akter et al., 2022; Niinimäki et al., 2020). Mukendi et al. (2020) describe the polarization among consumers about eco-fashion helping to reduce the use of clothing materials and foster responsibility towards the environment.

Nevertheless, Lee et al. (2020) found that many consumers need help understanding or knowing about environmental issues. The consumers are also found to have no guilt when disposing of expensive items. Hosted and Zabkar (2021) also found that consumers are less interested in environmental ethics and social awareness. While Rausch and Kopplin's (2021) study found that fashion designers are aware of the adverse effects of non-recyclable materials, they also found that if the consumers know that the materials are made from recycled materials, they will not buy them. They are more interested in buying new products. At this point, they believe that the used clothes can be given to developing countries for emergency aid or sold for recycling.

Disposing of clothes will have a long-term impact on the environment because the clothing is dyed with chemicals that can be toxic to the environment and human health (Lee et al., 2020; Niinimäki et al., 2020). Sustainable fashion is an alternative to dealing with the unsustainable aspects of fast fashion (Akter et al., 2022). Clothing retailers like Zara, H&M, and Uniqlo have introduced garment collecting and recycling initiatives to support sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion can be defined as "the variety of means by which a fashion item or behaviour could be perceived to be more sustainable, including (but not limited to) environmental, social, slow fashion, reuse, recycling, cruelty-free and anti-consumption and production practices" (Mukendi et al., 2020, p.20).

Sustainable fashion consumption is essential to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, "Responsible Consumption and Production." It refers to the efficient use of natural resources, minimizing the use of hazardous substances, and reducing pollution and waste production. SDG 12 encourages all parties to consider environmental impact and efficient use of resources at each stage of product production and usage (Akter et al., 2022; Yusof et al., 2022).

This study utilized the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Previous research has demonstrated that the TPB can explain behavior and intention. The TPB was initially used in social psychology, health and sports, education, marketing, organizational behavior, and another field. According to this theory, any desired behavior is influenced or initiated by someone's intention. This intention is triggered based on attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. These three factors are hypothesized to determine the intention to perform the desired behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Although the TPB has been widely used in several research studies, different results were found. TPB has repeatedly criticized for not considering sufficient construction of human behavior. There needs to be more prediction and actual behavior, which opens opportunities for further research to consider other variables to increase the utilization of the TPB.

Therefore, this study contributes to the current literature by extending the TPB by adding several new variables to the original model. This study aims to determine the role of pro-environmental attitude, environmental knowledge, subjective norm, price incentive, and perceived behavioral control in influencing sustainable fashion consumption among young Malaysian consumers. This study also aimed to assess a conceptual framework emphasizing the mediating influence of environmental value. This study also provides a new understanding of the function of the mediator effect since few studies have explored this matter in the literature. To the best of our knowledge, the role of environmental value has yet to be studied in the context of sustainable fashion.

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