The Role of Consumer Attitudes and Policies in Increasing Sustainable Buying Habits in the Fashion Industry
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Abstract

In a society where overconsumption is on the rise, sustainable fashion is essential. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore how sustainable fashion can be prioritized over fast fashion in order to help the sustainable fashion industry progress forward. This research determines consumers' attitudes toward purchasing sustainable fashion products based on numerous different factors such as existing policies, geographic setting, physical barriers, and financial barriers. A self-administered survey was conducted with respondents from various regions, geographic environments, age ranges (10 to 50+), and genders to examine how consumer behavior varies by demographic backgrounds. The data collected regarding their background was used to draw connections to the survey respondents' interest and willingness to pay for sustainable fashion products. The results suggest that consumers are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion products if they have an interest in sustainability and/or fashion, and if they reside in a major city or urban area. The results of the study reflect various factors that affect consumer decisions and provide policymakers with insights on how to best shape the sustainable fashion industry moving forward in response to growing concerns within the fast fashion industry.

Introduction

Clothing production is the third biggest global manufacturing industry after the automotive and technology industries. Currently, the global fashion sector is responsible for around 10% of carbon emissions and nearly 20% of wastewater (Bailey et al., 2022). In 2050, global clothing sales are anticipated to exceed 160 million tonnes, which is more than 3 times the amount of clothing sold now (García-Betorz, 2025). This has been driven primarily by market expansions in Asia and Africa, and has resulted in a significant increase in the industry's negative impacts on the environment (Hassan et al., 2022).

Examples of negative impacts by the clothing production industry on the environment include increased carbon emissions from manufacturing and transportation, water pollution due to untreated industrial waste, overconsumption of natural resources (including water and raw materials), and waste accumulation. In addition, textile production contributes to climate change more than international aviation and shipping combined (Owen et al., 2019). Although this statistic refers to the fashion industry as a whole, fast fashion–inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends–is the main driver of overproduction and the impacts that follow it.

Furthermore, the main goal of fast fashion is to lower production costs, and as a result, sustainability is often neglected. For example, fast fashion producers use non-biodegradable fabrics that are processed with harmful chemicals that contribute to water pollution, where production waste is disposed of in streams, lakes and oceans (Darmo, 2023). Fast fashion also consumes vast amounts of natural resources, using 141 billion cubic meters of water annually

and contributing to the 35% of microplastics polluting our oceans (Cardona, 2025). In response to this, the fashion industry is ever-changing, with more companies implementing sustainability practices or launching sustainable product lines. However, fast fashion still dominates the fashion industry, and is estimated to become a $291 billion industry by 2032 (Cardona, 2025).

On the other hand, sustainable fashion is a relatively small industry when compared to the fast fashion industry. The sustainable fashion industry is worth around $6.5 billion while the fast fashion industry is worth around $150.82 billion (Ruiz, 2024). The growth of sustainable fashion is projected to have positive economic impacts, including creating 18 million additional jobs globally by 2030 (Pacini, 2021). It can also solve many of the issues associated with fast fashion and provide a $192 billion boost to the global economy by 2030 through the combined benefit of product sales and the financial benefits of shifting to sustainable fashion (Ruiz, 2024). This figure accounts for cost savings from improved resource efficiency, reduced waste, and new revenue opportunities in resale, recycling, and sustainable material innovation.

Furthermore, transitioning workers out of the fast fashion industry and into the sustainable and ethical fashion industry will provide an overall lift in work and living standards (Sharma, 2024). Ethical fashion brands ensure that their workers are paid fair wages and work in safe environments. This approach helps to eradicate exploitative practices such as child labor and forced labor and helps make sure that workers earn a wage sufficient to meet their daily needs. The Fair Trade movement, for instance, has been instrumental in promoting ethical labor practices in the fashion industry (Munarriz & Tello, 2025).

Additionally, to address fast fashion's environmental and social issues—such as pollution, excessive waste, and unfair labor— regulatory frameworks have begun to emerge. For example, within the United States there have been Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) regulations that aim to shape a more sustainable fashion industry. ESG regulations refer to the rules, standards, and guidelines that govern business operations' environmental, social, and governance aspects. However, to date, there are no comprehensive federal ESG laws in the US. Instead, ESG frameworks are largely voluntary and are often adopted in response to investor pressure, consumer expectations, and state level initiatives. Therefore, it's important to recognize that while ESG guidelines provide a foundation for ethical and sustainable business practices, compliance is not universally or federally mandated, and varies depending on factors such as company type and market context.

In addition, the European Union has implemented the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive to enforce sustainability and transparency (European Commission, 2025). Furthermore, in the United States, the New York Fashion Act and California's Garment Worker Protection Act aim to hold brands accountable for labor rights and environmental impact. France has also taken a strong stance with its Anti-waste Law, banning the destruction of unsold clothing ("France's Anti-waste and Circular Economy Law"), while the UK has proposed a Fast Fashion Levy to discourage overproduction (Carrington, 2019). As regulations tighten and consumer demand for ethical fashion grows, the industry is gradually shifting toward more responsible and sustainable practices, ultimately making sustainable fashion the norm.

Going in-depth to specific brands, fast fashion brands like Shein, Zara, and H&M dominate the fast-fashion industry by rapidly producing low-cost clothing, often at the expense of environmental sustainability and ethical labor practices. Companies such as Forever 21 and Boohoo also contribute to overproduction and textile waste, making fast fashion one of the biggest polluters (Domenitz et al., 2023). In response, sustainable brands like Patagonia, Reformation, and Eileen Fisher are leading the shift toward ethical and eco-friendly fashion by using recycled materials, fair trade labor, and circular production models. Luxury brands such as Stella McCartney have also embraced sustainability by avoiding animal products and prioritizing eco-conscious designs ("Top 10 Sustainable Fashion Manufacturing Companies", 2023). Moreover, some fast fashion companies have attempted to improve their environmental impact by launching sustainable lines, such as H&M's Conscious Collection and Zara's Join Life, which incorporate recycled and responsibly sourced materials ("Materials", 2025; Gheorghe et al., 2021). Additionally, major sportswear brands like Nike and Adidas have introduced initiatives such as Nike's Move to Zero and Adidas' Parley collaboration, focusing on reducing carbon footprints and repurposing ocean plastic ("Nike Sustainability Move to Zero", 2025; "Adidas x Parley for the Oceans", 2025).

Thus, this paper explores how understanding attitudes toward sustainable fashion can help us make policy decisions to further enact positive economic and environmental benefits. Through a survey completed by a broad group of respondents, this research provides valuable insight into consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion and consumers' willingness to choose eco-friendly options over fast fashion. By assessing factors such as price sensitivity, motivation, and perception of sustainable fashion, the survey helps determine whether consumers are ready to shift toward more responsible purchasing behaviors. Generally, when the price of sustainable clothing is higher, consumers opt for the cheaper option over the sustainable option. Therefore, if respondents indicate a strong preference for sustainable clothing when price and design are comparable, it suggests that affordability and awareness are key barriers rather than a lack of interest. Finally, if businesses and policymakers address these consumer concerns, such as pricing and accessibility, by investing in sustainable innovations, they can contribute to a growing market while reducing the negative impacts of fast fashion.

Literature Review

While past papers have explored the impact of ESG on consumer choice and consumer willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion products, this research is unique in that it explores the impact of regulations that currently exist, and how companies and regulations can be better altered to enact positive change.

Several papers have examined the relationship between ESG practices and consumer decision-making. In a paper by Rastogi et al., the authors examined how ESG practices impact consumer purchasing decisions (2024). Specifically, they focused on how word-of-mouth and corporate image connect with ESG practices to impact consumer trust, eventually impacting purchase intent. Through a questionnaire given to 393 Gen Z participants that were aware of ESG practices, they concluded that ESG practices significantly increase corporate image and positive word-of-mouth which build consumer trust, and ultimately increase purchase intent (Rastogi et al., 2024).

In another paper by He, it is concluded that ESG in the fashion industry can effectively promote the sustainable development of individual enterprises as well as the industry as a whole (He, 2023). Through reports and qualitative analysis, He finds that the development of ESG in the fashion industry can not only mitigate the negative impacts but also lead to more protection of natural resources by adopting more environmentally friendly production methods (2023). In addition, He mentions that ESG practices by fashion companies will increase consumer recognition and loyalty to their brands (2023). In addition, ESG in fashion companies can also promote the overall sustainability of the industry and contribute to future sustainability. In another paper by Lee and Rhee, they examined how corporate ESG management affects consumers' brand choice (2023). The study concluded that ESG has a positive effect on brand image and brand attitude through consumer surveys.

In addition to ESG, several papers have discussed the influence of consumers' backgrounds, and its effect on consumers' willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. Khan, Varaksina and Hinterhuber (2024) have specifically researched the influence of cultural differences on consumers' willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. They utilize PLS-SEM analysis to show a difference between consumers' willingness to purchase in Italy and Russia and conclude that sustainable fashion can't be fostered without taking into account the characteristics of the specific region. Furthermore, Pires et al. (2024) find that sustainable fashion means something different to different consumers, affecting their attitude, and their willingness to pay a certain amount for it. The different perception of sustainable fashion can come from many different factors such as different backgrounds. For example, for a consumer with no prior background knowledge on sustainable fashion, they may perceive sustainable fashion as fashion items that are more sustainable than fast fashion. On the other hand, for a consumer with prior knowledge on sustainable fashion, they may perceive sustainable fashion as a specific impact on the environment, and the fashion industry. Pires et al. also conclude that the sustainable fashion consumers are willing to pay more than those who are not sustainable fashion consumers. In addition, their study finds that there is not a fixed value or percentage that determines how much consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable fashion, and cannot be represented by a linear relationship.

In addition, another paper, Khan et al. (2022) use a survey to test the awareness level of consumers and their willingness to pay for green clothing—designed and produced with environmental sustainability and ethical considerations in mind—and the impacts that follow. The results showcase how different backgrounds such as gender, income, and age affect the study groups' willingness to pay more and their overall awareness.

In addition, several papers have examined the behavior of consumers not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion. In a study by Kwok-pan et al. (2019), through a survey conducted, they conclude that few people are willing to pay more for sustainable fashion. Kwok-pan et al. state, "Even in Shanghai, the city most supportive of the concept, only 22% of people say they will pay a premium for sustainable fashion. It was also apparent that respondents consider the product (46%) much more than the brand (11%) when purchasing sustainable fashion." Therefore, while growing awareness of sustainable fashion is present, actual consumer behavior, such as the willingness to pay a premium, remains limited and heavily influenced by demographic factors and perceived product value. In another paper by Groening, Sarkis and Zhu (2017), they

discuss how the major factor is the price point. They conclude that because sustainable fashion is often more expensive, consumers are not willing to change their purchasing behaviors and pay more for a premium green product. They also mention in their paper how the consumers who consider themselves "eco-friendly" do not necessarily correlate to their willingness to participate in more environmentally conscious purchasing behaviors.

In another paper by Yan, Hyllegard and Blaesi (2010), their study conducted through a questionnaire finds that brands have to communicate their sustainability claims clearly and transparently as it leads to a positive impact on the consumers' attitudes. If the consumer is aware that the brand is sustainable, they may be more willing to buy and pay a higher price for its products.

Thus, this paper aims to connect all of these components mentioned to conclude how more consumers can obtain sustainable buying habits and showcase the positive impacts of sustainable fashion over fast fashion. By building on previous research and findings, this paper aims to showcase how new implementations and policies can allow a shift to a more sustainable fashion focused industry.

Methods

Sampling and Data Collection Methods

The target respondents in this study ranged from ages 10 to 50+, both female and male. Respondents were from various geographic locations including urban, rural, major city and suburban areas. Some respondents were sustainable fashion shoppers while others were not. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, KakaoTalk, Snapchat, and WhatsApp were used to reach the intended respondents. The respondents were anonymous and did not disclose any personal information.

Measurement Items

The survey method was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire as the data collection technique. The survey was administered to gauge respondents' willingness to purchase sustainable fashion products over fast fashion products.

 Respondents were provided with a sliding scale from 1-5 for the following statements:

1. It is easy for me to be environmentally conscious while purchasing clothing or fashion products.
2. I feel motivated to buy sustainable fashion products.
3. I believe environmentally conscious clothing can still be fashionable.
4. If the price and design looked the same between sustainable fashion products and fast fashion products, I would buy the sustainable option.
5. Price is a big factor that I consider when purchasing clothing.

6. In general, I am interested in fashion and clothing.
7. I often think about whether or not the clothing I buy is environmentally friendly.
8. Would you be willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products? If yes, how much?

In addition, there was a free response section asking the following questions:

1. What would motivate you to buy environmentally friendly clothing?
2. Do you know of any fashion brands that have caught your eye recently that practice sustainability?

The questions in the survey were asked in order to connect the finding of the results to how economic policies can better be designed in order to support sustainable consumption and fashion. To explore the relationships between the survey results and a shift toward the sustainable fashion industry, 4 hypotheses were created in order to provide a framework for the analysis.

Hypotheses

1. People who are more likely to buy sustainable fashion products are generally more interested in the environment and/or fashion.

2. People are only willing to pay for sustainable fashion products if it is the same price or cheaper than fast fashion.

3. The attitudes toward sustainable fashion are higher in more urban areas compared to other geographic backgrounds.

4. Those of the younger age category are more inclined to buy sustainable fashion products.

Results

The results from the self-administered online survey offer valuable insights into consumer perceptions and behaviors surrounding sustainable fashion. The survey gathered demographic information—including gender, age, geographic setting, and occupation—and asked a series of free response questions related to environmental consciousness, interest in fashion, price sensitivity, and willingness to purchase sustainable clothing. In summary, respondents were nearly evenly split across genders. Respondents reported ages of 10-50+ years, with a slightly higher concentration of respondents in the 10-19 range. In addition, the majority of respondents reside in an urban or suburban area while the minority reside in a more rural setting. The majority of respondents were students, followed by individuals employed full-time, and lastly, those who were unemployed.
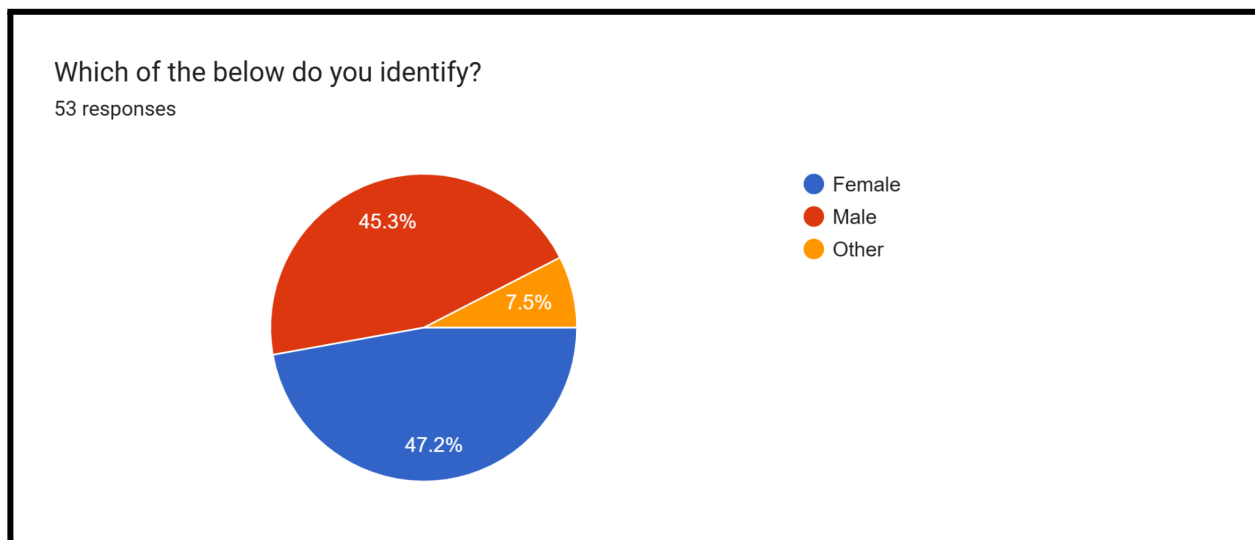
Figure 1: Gender of Respondent

A total of 53 responses from the online survey were collected at the end of the data collection process. Out of the 53 respondents, 47.2% were female, while 45.3% were male and 7.5% classified as others.
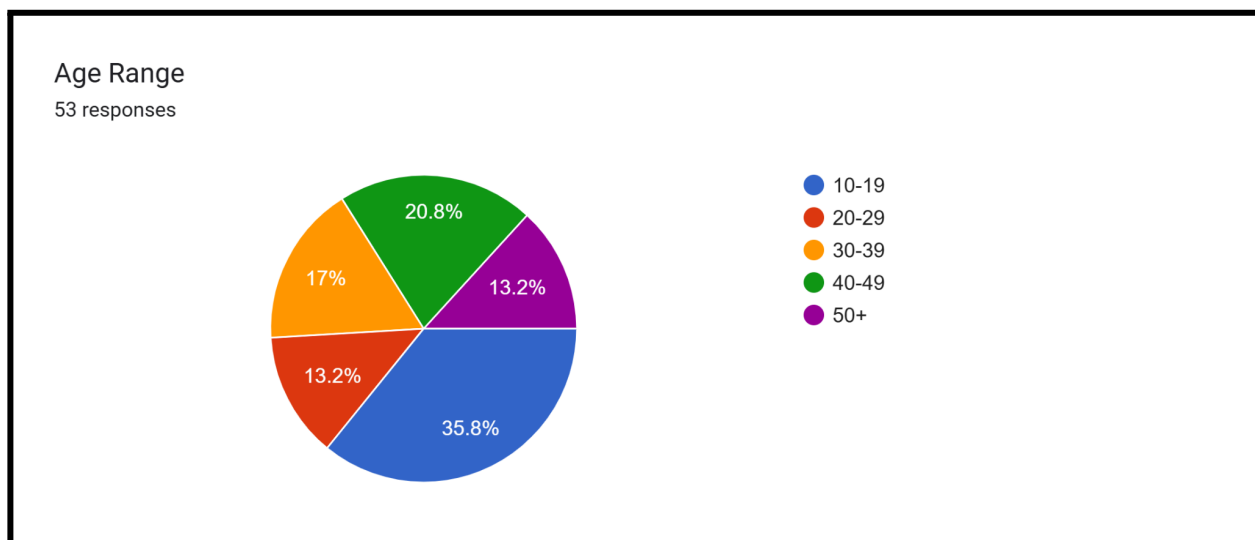

Figure 2: Age Range of Respondent

The age ranges of the respondents are from 10 to 19 (35.8%), 20 to 29 (13.2%), 30 to 39 (17%), 40 to 49 (20.8%) and 50+ (13.2%).
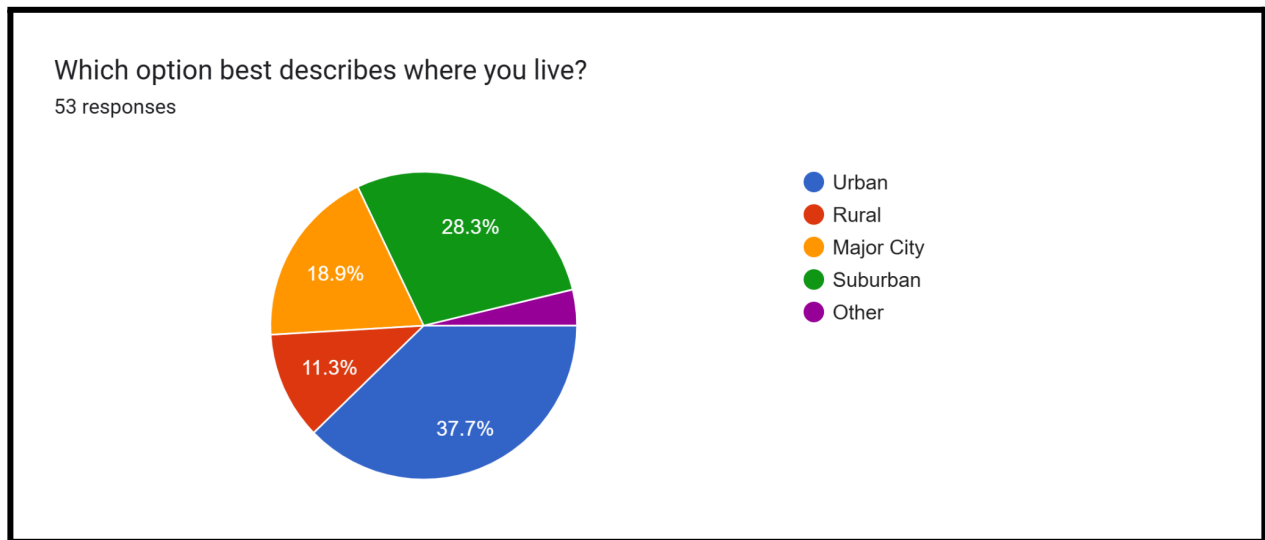
Figure 3: Geographical Setting of Respondent

37.7% people live in an urban area, 11.3% people live in a rural area, 18.9% people live in a major city, 28.3% live in a suburban area and 3.8% lived in "other" area.
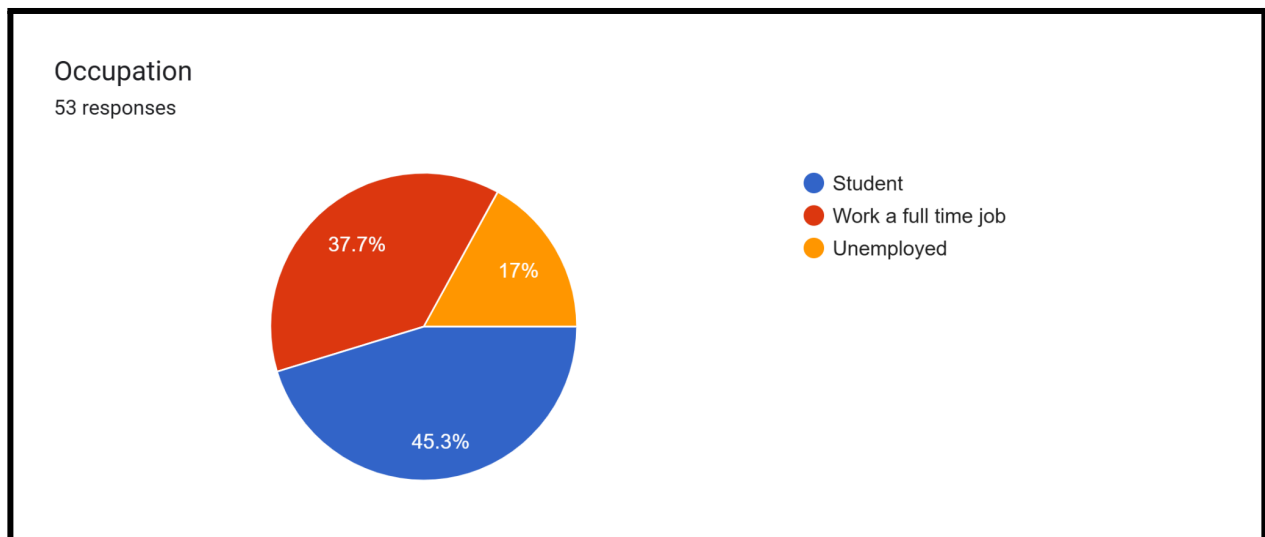

Figure 4: Occupation of Respondent

45.3% of respondents were students, 37.7% of respondents work a full time job, and 17% of respondents were unemployed.

In addition, there was a set of scaled questions where 1 corresponds to "least likely to agree," and 5 corresponds to "most likely to agree." In summary, most respondents stated that it was a "2" for the statement of "*It is easy for me to be environmentally conscious while purchasing clothing or fashion products,*" and "I *feel motivated to buy sustainable fashion products*". The majority of respondents responded with "4" for the statement of "*I believe environmentally conscious clothing can still be fashionable*". The majority of respondents responded with "5" for the statement of "*If the price and design looked the same between sustainable fashion products and fast fashion products, I would buy the sustainable option,*" and "*Price is a big factor that I*

consider when purchasing clothing". The majority of respondents answered "1" or "2" for "*I often think about whether or not the clothing I buy is environmentally friendly*". Finally, just under 50% of respondents stated that they would be not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products. Evaluation of these responses will be provided when reviewing each hypothesis.

Question 1: It is easy for me to be environmentally conscious while purchasing clothing or fashion products.
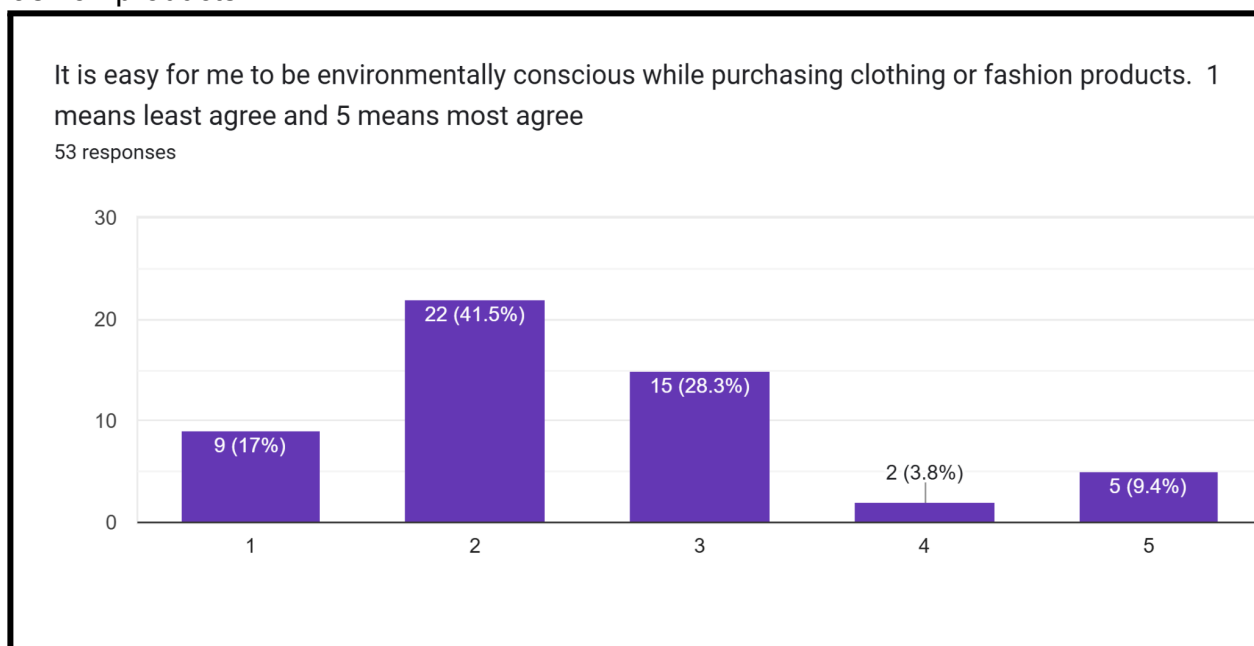
Figure 5: Percentage of Environmentally Consciousness Respondents

Question 2: I feel motivated to buy sustainable fashion products.

Figure 6: Motivation to Purchase Sustainable Fashion Products of Respondents

Question 3: I believe environmentally conscious clothing can still be fashionable.

I believe environmentally conscious clothing can still be fashionable.
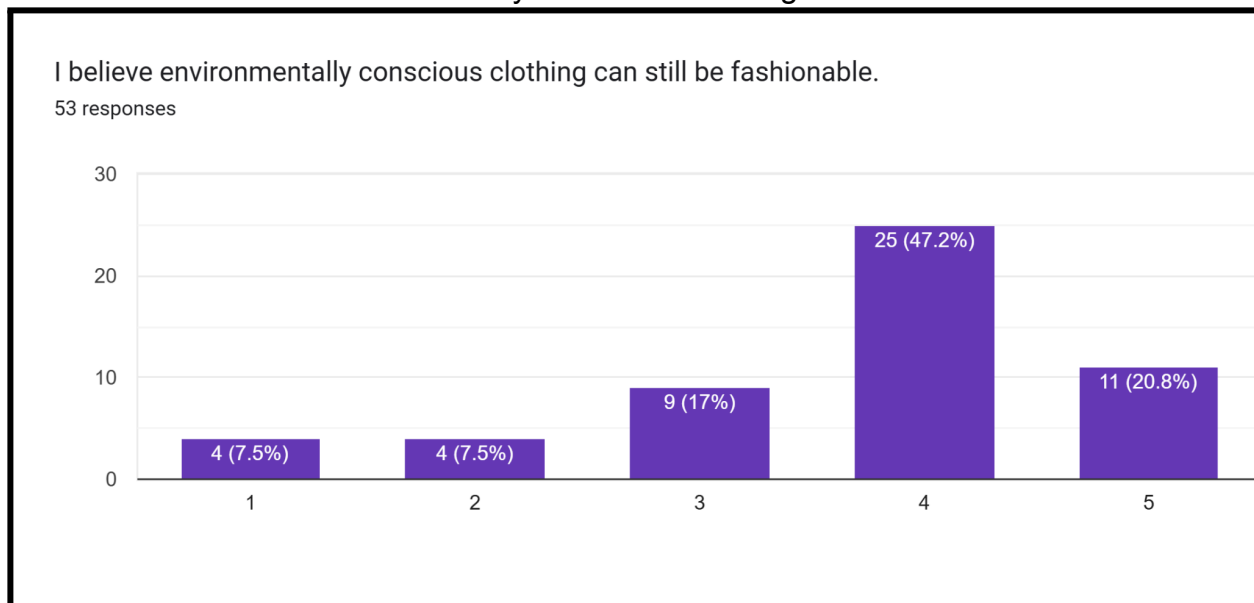
53 responses

Figure 7: Preferences for Environmental Consciousness and Being Fashionable

Question 4: If the price and design looked the same between sustainable fashion products and fast fashion products, I would buy the sustainable option.
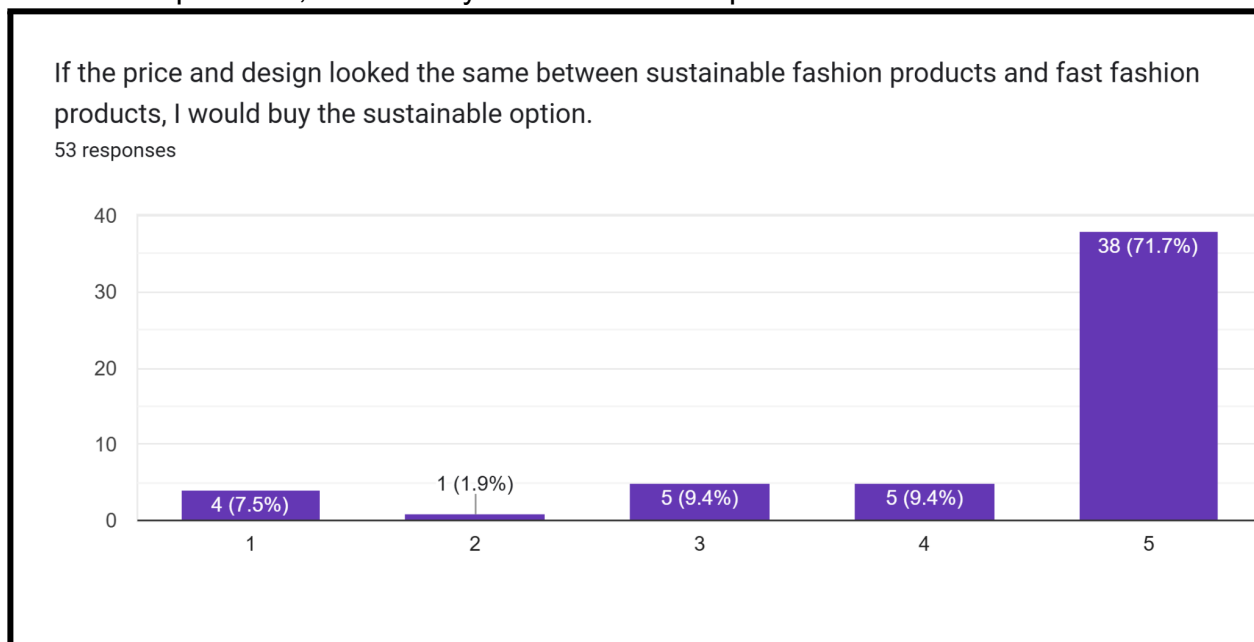

If the price and design looked the same between sustainable fashion products and fast fashion products, I would buy the sustainable option.

53 responses

Figure 8: Likeliness of Purchasing Sustainable Fashion over Fast Fashion of Respondents

Question 5: Price is a big factor that I consider when purchasing clothing.

Figure 9: Price as a Factor for Respondents

Question 6: In general, I am interested in fashion and clothing.

Figure 10: Interest in Fashion of Respondents

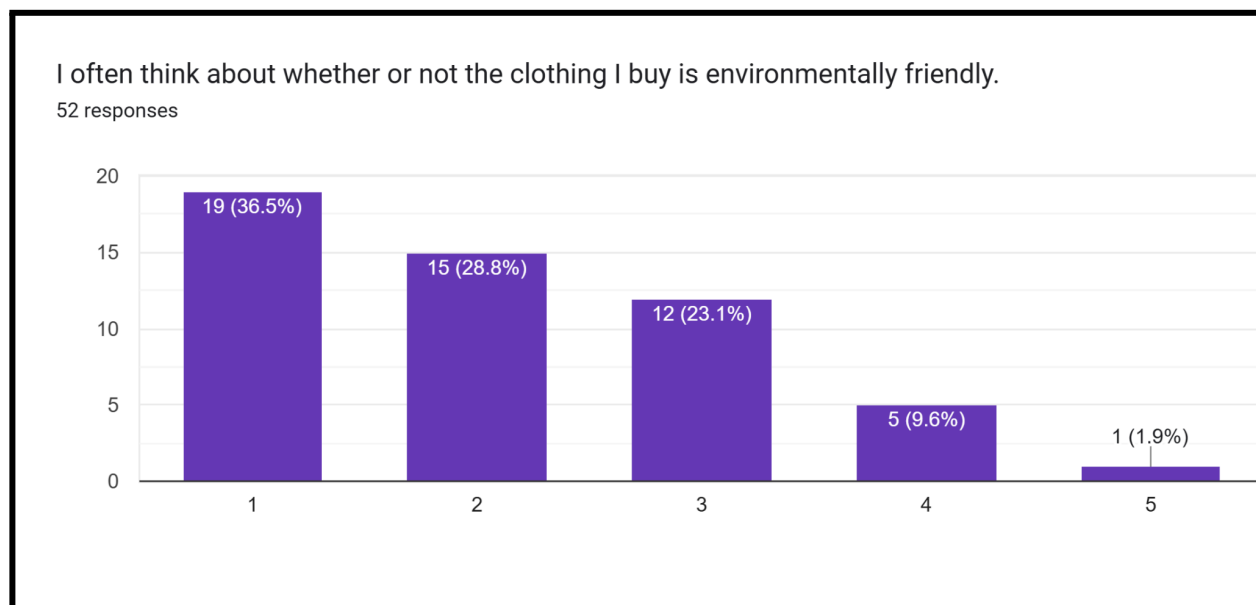Question 7: I often think about whether or not the clothing I buy is environmentally friendly.

Figure 11: Consideration of Sustainable Clothing

Question 8: Would you be willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products? If yes, how much?
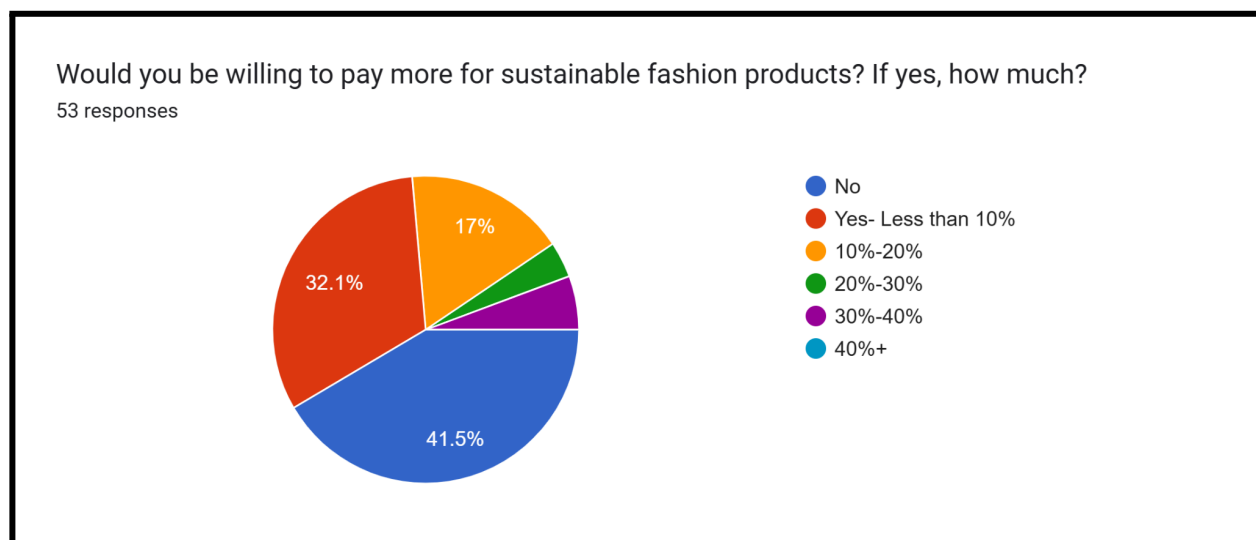

Figure 12: Willingness to Pay More

There was also a free response section in the survey, where respondents had the option to answer the question: "*What would motivate you to buy environmentally friendly clothing?*" Most responses contained ideas such as: "if it wasn't different than buying normal clothes", "if it had the same styles as non-environmentally friendly clothing", "if it is affordable, stylish, and offers the same or better quality as other options". Additionally, some respondents stated that knowing how the production process truly benefits the environment would influence their decision.

Full results of free response questions are as follows:

price, style, brand
famous brand or trending
If it wasn't different than buying normal clothes
If it is cheaper as well as prettier than its counterpart, I would buy it.
Ethical production and a desire to reduce environmental impact
Having the same styles as non-environmentally friendly clothing
fashionable
More promotion and advertising!
next generations
Knowing that it helps the environment
If it were more accessible and as readily available as fast fashion
If it wasn't different than buying normal clothes
Containing less plastic material
don't know
Design
same style and price
Famous brand made it
If it was easy and there were significant benefits that would impact me personally
I would be motivated if there was specific information on how this is helping the environment.
If it wasn't a hassle
Good deal
I choose environmentally friendly clothing to reduce waste, support ethical practices, and align with my values of sustainability.
Environmental protection is a serious issue that we are facing
I would be motivated to buy environmentally friendly clothing if it is affordable, stylish, and offers the same or better quality as other options. Additionally, knowing that the production process truly benefits the environment would significantly influence my decision.
Design and usability
if it was more easily available and cheaper
The quality of the garment

The respondents also had the option to answer another free response question: "*Do you know of any fashion brands that have caught your eye recently that practice sustainability?*"
Responses included brands such as Free People, Madewell, Nike, Patagonia, and Everlane.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how people feel toward sustainable fashion using the 4 hypotheses created as the framework. In addition, behavioral economics concepts such as self-signaling, social norms, warm-glow effects, and hyperbolic discounting were taken into account of how people react. These results reveal patterns that help explain what drives or limits sustainable fashion adoption across different demographic groups.

Hypothesis 1: People who are more likely to buy sustainable fashion products are generally more interested in the environment and/or fashion.

It can be concluded from the results of the self-administered questionnaire that there exists a strong connection between people with an interest in fashion and clothing to people who would buy the sustainable alternative.

Based on the survey (as shown in Figure 10: Interest in Fashion of Respondents), 24 respondents (45.3%) have said that they were interested in fashion and clothing, and answered "5" on the sliding scale to question 6: "In general, I am interested in fashion and clothing". Out of those 24 respondents, all 24 respondents stated that they choose the sustainable alternative (as shown in Figure 8).

This hypothesis aligns with the idea of social preference in behavioral economics. Consumers who strongly care for the environment and/or fashion are more likely to make consumer decisions that are in line with their own values and social identity. Furthermore, self-signaling theory in behavioral economics suggests that people derive intrinsic pleasure from making choices that support their self image. For example, environmentally conscious people purchase sustainable fashion as a way of demonstrating their commitment to sustainability, and people who care for fashion may be drawn to sustainable fashion that is compatible with their style choice.

In addition, the warm-glow effect of behavioral economics suggests that consumers derive a psychological reward in making ethical purchases which increases their willingness to buy sustainable fashion products as they are already interested in fashion and clothing.

Hypothesis 2: People are only willing to pay for sustainable fashion products if it is the same price or cheaper than fast fashion.

This hypothesis showcases the idea of price sensitivity in economics. Price is what most consumers consider to be the key factor in making choices particularly in fashion. If sustainable fashion is more expensive, consumers will experience the pain of paying, and therefore will be unwilling to purchase it over fast fashion.

As showcased in Figure 12: Willingness to Pay More, 41.5% of people are not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products and answered "no" to question 8: "Would you be willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products? If yes, how much?"

Consumers are more likely to purchase the sustainable option if the price is competitive to fast fashion products (Pires, 2024). If there are incentives, such as better quality or direct impacts on how the sustainable fashion product would positively impact the environment, consumers are also more likely to purchase the sustainable option (Han et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the idea of hyperbolic discounting of behavioral economics can be applied. Hyperbolic discounting is a consumers' willingness to choose immediate rewards over rewards in the future even if the immediate rewards are smaller. Therefore, they will prefer fast fashion

unless sustainable fast fashion is equal in price or cheaper as the grander impacts of sustainable fashion over fast fashion are not visible to the consumer at the time of purchase (Pires, 2024).

Hypothesis 3: The attitudes toward sustainable fashion are higher in more urban areas compared to other geographic backgrounds.

Sustainable fashion attitudes are stronger in more urbanized regions than other geographic backgrounds.

As shown in Figure 3: Geographical Setting of Respondent, 37.7% of respondents live in an urban region. Out of those 20 respondents who were part of the 37.7% who live in an urban region, all 20 stated that if the price and design looked the same between sustainable fashion products and fast fashion products, they would buy the sustainable option as shown in Figure 8: Likeliness of Purchasing Sustainable Fashion over Fast Fashion of Respondents. All consumers living in an urban area had a positive attitude toward sustainable fashion, more than consumers from any other geographic background.

Urban areas are more likely to be exposed to sustainability initiatives and social movements encouraging ethical consumption in many different sectors, not just sustainable fashion. This can be connected to the idea of social norms in behavioral economics. Social norms "signal appropriate behavior and are classed as behavioral expectations or rules within a group of people." ("Social Norms"). Greater exposure to sustainability creates stronger descriptive social norms, as consumers observe other people engaging in sustainable activities and experience a social pressure to do the same (Yamin, 2019).

Additionally, urban areas tend to have more sustainable fashion options available, so consumers can more readily access, and compare them.

This finding also showcases the idea that if price and design are the same, consumers are willing to purchase the sustainable option and therefore, price and the lack of design are the key setbacks.

Hypothesis 4: Those of the younger age category are more inclined to buy sustainable fashion products.

As shown in Figure 2: Age Range of Respondents, 35.8% of survey respondents were in the 10-19 age category. Among respondents aged 10–19 (35.8%), all 19 selected "5" on the sliding scale, indicating that if price and design were the same, they would choose the sustainable option.

This finding reflects the idea that newer generations, such as Gen Z who are individuals born between 1997 and 2012, have been more exposed to increased awareness of climate change and social responsibility which impacts their attitudes and consumer behaviors.

In addition, younger age groups have a greater importance on ethical consumption because they have a duty to help the environment for the future. In addition, they are more worried about the effects of climate change that they potentially might face themselves (Poortinga, 2023).

Discussion

The results of the survey highlight key patterns in consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion. The results reveal that while interest in environmentally friendly clothing is high, actual purchasing behavior is heavily influenced by factors such as price, accessibility, and style. A significant portion of respondents indicated they would choose sustainable fashion over fast fashion if both options were equally priced and designed. Therefore, financial and aesthetic trade offs remain major barriers.

Furthermore, this is especially evident among Gen Z and teenage respondents, who made up the largest age group in the survey. As a generation shaped by social media, Gen Z consumers are likely to support sustainability but only when it is aligned with their everyday lifestyle. For brands and policymakers, the implication is clear that in order to engage younger consumers, sustainable fashion must be both stylish and accessible, and seamlessly fit into mainstream retail without demanding significant sacrifices in price or personal style. Furthermore, to target Gen Z consumers, social media can be utilized, for example, to market products, and the benefits that follow.

Furthermore, the results of the self-administered questionnaire indicate that price remains one of the most significant barriers for consumers to purchase sustainable clothing, with most consumers only willing to consider sustainable options if they are priced the same or cheaper than fast fashion alternatives. Many respondents stated responses such as, "if it wasn't different than buying normal clothes," "famous brand or trending," and "if it was more easily available and cheaper." These comments suggest that consumers are value-driven and environmentally aware; however, they prioritize affordability and convenience. To make sustainable fashion more accessible, brands and companies must find ways to reduce costs without compromising ethical and environmental standards. One approach is through the idea of economies of scale. For example, by increasing the demand and production of sustainable textiles like organic cotton or recycled polyester, manufacturers can lower the per-unit cost of these materials. As sustainable materials become more affordable, eco-friendly clothing can be priced more competitively.

Beyond price, strengthening consumer awareness and perceived importance of sustainable fashion is crucial. Many consumers may not fully understand the long-term benefits of sustainable fashion, such as the ethical production practices and the benefit to the environment. To address this, brands should focus on educating consumers through more transparent labeling and marketing campaigns.

In addition, improving availability and convenience is another essential factor in shifting consumer behavior in order for them to purchase sustainable fashion. For example, integrating sustainable fashion into mainstream retailers as well as niche markets can allow for an increased availability to a wider range of consumers. For example, more well known brands can incorporate sustainable options into their product lines, and make sustainable fashion widely

available in both physical stores and online platforms, which will encourage more consumers to make sustainable choices.

Additionally, brands can help nudge consumers toward ethical consumption by making sustainable products the first choice in stores and online shopping platforms. They can also offer loyalty rewards for sustainable purchases, which will encourage more environmentally friendly shopping habits.

Finally, policymakers also have a role to play in promoting sustainable fashion through stricter regulations on fast fashion as well as bridging the gap between interest and action. ESG standards have already shown their effectiveness in encouraging businesses to adopt more responsible practices. However, further policy interventions are necessary to create a market environment where sustainable fashion can become a bigger and improved industry. Governments can implement tax incentives for companies producing sustainable fashion, provide subsidies for sustainable materials, invest in public awareness campaigns that normalize sustainable choices, and impose stricter regulations on fast fashion due to their negative environmental impact. These efforts could make sustainable fashion more competitive against fast fashion in terms of both price and availability, leading to more consumers choosing sustainable fashion products. Thus, increasing consumer motivation to purchase sustainable fashion requires a multi-step approach that combines many different factors.

Limitations

The results of this study have a few limitations.

First, the results cannot easily be generalized worldwide since the survey is geographically limited, and has a relatively small group of 53 respondents. The responses reflect the opinions of individuals in specific demographics (students) and economic settings (urban areas) that are perhaps not typical of overall trends within sustainable fashion.

Therefore, future research needs to expand the sample by covering a wider and more diverse population across multiple regions and socioeconomic groups to increase the generalization of the study. Future research could also incorporate digital consumer behavior data such as online shopping patterns. For example, click-rates on sustainable product pages can be analyzed or social media engagement on sustainable product pages to validate survey findings.

Finally, this study was based on a self-conducted survey which can potentially introduce respondent bias in viewing their sustainable fashion behavior. For future studies, observational methods can be incorporated to check, and confirm these self-reported attitudes.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of research exploring the intersection of economics and sustainability in the fashion industry. While past studies have primarily focused on consumer attitudes of sustainable fashion and consumer willingness to purchase sustainable products, this research focuses on the intersection among policies and barriers that consumers

face while deciding to purchase sustainable fashion. By addressing both the financial and psychological barriers to sustainable consumption, this study can help policymakers and businesses come together to design markets that encourage responsible fashion choices while maintaining economic growth which will ultimately drive lasting behavioral change in the fashion industry.

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