

To Explore and Analyse the Attitude, Behaviour, And Purchasing Decisions of Generation Z (Gen Z) Consumers Towards Sustainable Fashion.

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the attitudes, behaviours, and purchasing decisions of Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers toward sustainable fashion in the Indian context. As the environmental consequences of fast fashion gain increasing visibility, understanding how the most digitally connected and socially conscious generation engages with sustainability has become vital for shaping responsible consumption patterns. This research investigates the complex interplay between sustainability awareness, brand trust, price perception, and perceived fashionability, and how these factors influence Gen Z's consumer attitudes and behaviours. Adopting a quantitative methodology supported by preliminary qualitative interviews, data were collected from 115 Gen Z respondents through a structured survey. The conceptual model examined consumer attitude as a mediating variable between four key independent variables and the dependent variable — consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions toward sustainable fashion. Statistical tools such as descriptive analysis, correlation, regression modelling, and sentiment analysis were employed using Microsoft Excel, Jamovi, and NVivo.

Findings reveal that while Gen Z exhibits high awareness of environmental issues and holds favourable attitudes toward sustainable fashion, this does not consistently translate into actual purchase behaviour — confirming the existence of an attitude-behaviour gap. Among all variables, sustainability awareness and brand trust showed the strongest influence on attitude formation, whereas fashionability and price perception had limited direct effects on behaviour. Sentiment analysis of open-ended responses highlighted key barriers including affordability, limited style options, and brand skepticism, especially regarding greenwashing. The research contributes theoretically by validating the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the Consumers' Sustainability Consciousness (CSC) Construct, and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model in the sustainable fashion context. Managerial implications suggest that brands must adopt multidimensional strategies—emphasising transparency, affordability, and style innovation—while aligning their communication with Gen Z values. Limitations such as sample size, urban-centric bias, and reliance on self-reported data are acknowledged, with recommendations for future research including cross-cultural comparisons, longitudinal studies, and experimental interventions. This study offers actionable insights for marketers, educators, and policymakers aiming to bridge the intention-action gap and build a more sustainable fashion ecosystem driven by Gen Z.

Keywords: Generation Z, Sustainable Fashion, Consumer Attitude, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainability Awareness, Brand Trust, Price Perception, Fashionability, Attitude-Behaviour Gap, Quantitative Research, Regression Analysis, Sentiment Analysis, Sustainable Consumption

1. Introduction

The fashion industry, long revered for its ability to reflect culture, inspire innovation, and drive global commerce, has increasingly come under scrutiny for its environmental and social impacts. Ranked among the top polluting industries globally, fashion production and consumption contribute to high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, overproduction, and labor exploitation. In light of these challenges, sustainable fashion has emerged as a vital counter-movement—one that aims to reform how clothing is designed, produced, marketed, and consumed.

Sustainable fashion is not limited to the use of organic or recycled materials; it encompasses a broader ethos that considers the entire lifecycle of a garment, including ethical sourcing, fair labor practices, low-impact manufacturing, circularity, and transparency. With innovations such as waterless dyeing, biodegradable fabrics, slow fashion movements, upcycling, and the adoption of blockchain for traceability, the fashion industry is slowly pivoting towards sustainability. However, these supply-side initiatives are only part of the solution. The real transformation lies in reshaping consumer behavior—especially among emerging, influential cohorts.

In this context, **Generation Z (Gen Z)**—those born between 1995 and 2010—has attracted significant academic and commercial interest. Known for being tech-savvy, socially conscious, and value-driven, Gen Z consumers are often portrayed as catalysts for sustainability. Multiple global studies (e.g., Nielsen, 2016; Financial Times, 2018) indicate that Gen Z exhibits a strong preference for ethical brands, aligns purchasing decisions with environmental values, and expects brands to be accountable for their social and environmental impact.

However, emerging empirical evidence suggests a **"value-action gap"**—a notable disconnect between Gen Z's sustainability values and their actual consumption behavior. While they may support sustainable causes and follow eco-conscious influencers, Gen Z often continues to purchase from fast fashion brands, primarily due to affordability, style trends, convenience, and limited access to sustainable alternatives. This contradiction raises essential questions about the underlying motivations and barriers shaping Gen Z's purchasing decisions in the fashion domain.

In **India**, this issue is particularly pertinent. With over 45% of the population under the age of 25, India represents one of the largest Gen Z populations in the world. It also hosts a dual reality—on one hand, a booming fast fashion market with brands like Zudio, H&M, and Myntra; on the other, a growing yet niche sustainable fashion sector led by startups like NorthMist and Okhai. Despite rising awareness about climate change, ethical labor, and conscious consumerism in India, the adoption of sustainable fashion remains limited. Moreover, most existing research on this topic is based in Western contexts, leaving a significant knowledge gap when it comes to understanding the sustainable behavior of Indian youth.

To address this, the present study explores the complex relationship between **attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers in India toward sustainable fashion**. It is grounded in three well-established behavioral theories: the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, which focuses on attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control; the **Consumer Sustainability Consciousness (CSC) Construct**, which expands this lens to include ethical and social motivations; and the **Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model**, which explores how marketing and environmental cues affect consumer response.

At a **personal level**, the motivation for this research emerged from growing discomfort with the hidden costs of clothing consumption—be it environmental degradation or worker exploitation. Discovering sustainable Indian brands such as **NorthMist**, which operate with transparency and ethical sourcing, further stimulated curiosity about consumer response to such brands. Do Gen Z consumers recognize and reward such efforts, or are their choices still dominated by price, trends, and peer influence?

Furthermore, the digital ecosystem in which Gen Z thrives—characterized by platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube—adds another layer of complexity. Social media influencers, branded content, and hybrid storytelling formats often shape Gen Z's perceptions of fashion and sustainability. However, the extent to which these influences lead to informed, ethical purchases remains unclear.

Thus, this study is driven by three core research questions:

1. **How do Gen Z consumers in India perceive sustainable fashion?**
2. **What are the key factors that influence their attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions?**
3. **How can brands effectively bridge the gap between Gen Z's sustainable intentions and their actual fashion consumption behavior?**

By answering these questions, the research seeks to:

- Illuminate the **motivators and barriers** that shape sustainable fashion adoption among Indian Gen Z.
- Offer insights into the **role of brand trust, pricing, fashionability, and social influence** in shaping behavior.
- Contribute to both **theoretical literature** and **practical strategies** for advancing sustainability in emerging consumer markets.

Ultimately, the study aims to support policymakers, educators, and fashion brands in developing **targeted strategies that empower Gen Z to make more conscious, responsible, and consistent fashion choices**—closing the gap between sustainability awareness and sustainable action.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions

Extant literature highlights that while Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers are perceived as environmentally and ethically conscious, a gap persists between their attitudes and actual purchase behavior. [Chaturvedi et al. \(2020\)](#) found that environmental concern, perceived value, and willingness to pay significantly influence Gen Z's intent to buy recycled clothing. However, [Djafarova and Foots \(2022\)](#) discovered that although Gen Z shows high ethical awareness, financial constraints and lifestyle factors often hinder ethical purchases.

[Williams \(2022\)](#), focusing on South Africa, emphasized that peer pressure and clear product labeling positively influence Gen Z's purchase intentions. Similarly, [Mahrs and Berthem \(2022\)](#) found in Sweden that high prices, limited accessibility, and lack of product knowledge restrict actual adoption despite favorable attitudes. These findings underscore the persistence of the "attitude-behavior gap" and the importance of bridging intention with accessible product offerings.

2.2 Barriers to Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Multiple studies have explored the systemic challenges limiting sustainable fashion adoption. [Panhirun \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that Gen Z's intentions are adversely affected by high costs and lack of trust in brand claims, unlike Gen Y, whose behavior is moderated more by pricing alone. [Masserini et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted Gen Z's preference for second-hand fashion due to affordability, whereas Gen Y leans toward new sustainable fabric-based options.

[Kovacs \(2021\)](#) noted that Gen Z relies heavily on product labels and online content to form opinions, yet their decisions are obstructed by limited information and high costs. These findings collectively advocate for improved brand transparency, pricing innovation, and trust-building mechanisms.

2.3 Generational and Cultural Comparisons

Comparative studies indicate distinct patterns across age cohorts. [Lin and Chen \(2022\)](#) revealed that Gen Z shows stronger positive correlations between environmental consciousness and perceived value than older generations. Meanwhile, [Abrar et al. \(2021\)](#) confirmed that environmental apparel knowledge and green self-concept significantly influence Gen Z's purchase intent, validating the use of an extended TPB framework.

[Gazzola et al. \(2020\)](#) further emphasized that generational differences in circular economy awareness can significantly influence sustainable purchasing, with Gen Z prioritizing eco-consciousness more than previous generations, especially in Europe and Asia.

2.4 Role of Brand, Social Media, and Communication

Marketing efforts play a pivotal role in shaping Gen Z's sustainable fashion behavior. [Bergstrand and Åradsson \(2024\)](#) highlighted that transparency and ethical marketing significantly influence attitudes toward fast fashion brands. [Palomo-Domínguez et al. \(2023\)](#), using Vinted as a case study, revealed that although Gen Z values sustainability, convenience and affordability often outweigh sustainability narratives in brand selection.

Moreover, [Tran et al. \(2022\)](#) in Vietnam observed that social influence, design appeal, and product-service quality impact Gen Z's loyalty toward eco-fashion, suggesting that marketing strategies must combine emotional and rational appeals to enhance effectiveness.

2.5 Theoretical Insights and Psychological Drivers

Several studies have applied TPB, SOR, and value-based frameworks to understand Gen Z's decision-making process. [Arora and Manchanda \(2022\)](#) found that green perceived value influences purchase intention, with attitudes acting as a mediating variable. Similarly, [Ngo et al. \(2024\)](#) confirmed that product design, environmental concern, and social influence impact purchase decisions through both affective and cognitive routes, validating the relevance of the SOR and TPB models.

Collectively, these studies affirm that Gen Z's sustainable behavior is influenced by a complex interplay of awareness, brand trust, aesthetics, price sensitivity, and digital engagement, underscoring the need for multidimensional intervention strategies.

3. Research Objectives & Hypotheses

3.1 Scope of the Study

This research centers on exploring the attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions of Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers toward sustainable fashion, with a focus on the Indian context. The scope extends beyond surface-level consumer trends to examine the deeper cognitive, psychological, and socio-economic factors that shape sustainable fashion consumption. As the fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to global pollution and resource exploitation, understanding consumer dynamics becomes imperative in reshaping demand toward sustainability. This is particularly relevant in India, where the dual pressures of rapid urbanization and environmental challenges coexist with a growing fashion industry.

The study specifically focuses on Gen Z individuals, typically born between 1995 and 2010, who represent a tech-savvy, socially aware, and environmentally conscious demographic. Their consumption patterns, shaped by digital media and influencer culture, provide a unique lens through which to analyze sustainable fashion. Despite their awareness and intent, Gen Z consumers often exhibit a "value-action gap," where sustainable values do not always translate into sustainable purchases. This study aims to explore the variables influencing this disconnect—such as perceived fashionability, brand trust, sustainability awareness, and price perception—and how these factors interact to shape attitudes and decisions.

3.2 Research Objectives

The core objectives of this study are multifaceted. Firstly, it seeks to understand Gen Z's behavior and decision-making processes related to sustainable fashion, including how frequently they purchase such products and what influences these choices. Secondly, the study aims to assess how attitudes toward sustainability mediate the relationship between knowledge and action. Thirdly, the research evaluates the impact of sustainability awareness by investigating whether a high level of knowledge leads to proactive consumer behavior or if this is overshadowed by practical concerns like affordability and style.

Other objectives include analyzing the role of brand trust, especially in relation to greenwashing, and determining how the transparency and ethical reputation of a brand affect Gen Z's willingness to purchase. Similarly, the study investigates the perception of fashionability—whether sustainable fashion is seen as stylish enough to compete with mainstream trends—and how this affects adoption. Finally, a key objective is to identify actionable barriers and propose strategies that brands can implement to bridge the gap between intention and behavior.

3.3 Framing of Research Hypotheses

To systematically explore the research problem, the following hypotheses have been formulated based on the conceptual framework:

- **H1a:** A significant positive relationship exists among the independent variables—sustainability awareness, brand trust and recognition, price perception, and perceived fashionability.
- **H1b:** Each independent variable is significantly correlated with the mediating variable, i.e., consumer attitude.
- **H1c:** Each independent variable has a significant association with the dependent variable—Gen Z's consumer behavior and purchasing decisions toward sustainable fashion.
- **H1d:** There is a significant positive correlation between consumer attitude and sustainable fashion purchasing behavior.

Further hypotheses were developed to explore the effects of multiple variables collectively:

- **H2:** All independent variables together have a significant positive effect on consumer attitude.
- **H3:** All independent variables and the mediating variable collectively impact consumer behavior toward sustainable fashion.
- **H4a–H4d:** Each independent variable individually affects the dependent variable, with H4a (sustainability awareness), H4b (brand trust), H4c (fashionability), and H4d (price perception) assessed for direct effects.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study follows a **quantitative research design**. A structured survey was employed to collect primary data, while existing literature and industry reports served as secondary sources to contextualize findings. The quantitative approach ensures statistical generalizability and allows for in-depth analysis of relationships between variables. Prior to launching the main survey, a **pilot study** was conducted involving qualitative interviews with five Gen Z consumers. These preliminary conversations offered foundational insights and helped refine the questionnaire to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

The final questionnaire was designed using multiple types of questions: Likert-scale items to assess perceptions and attitudes; rank-ordering questions to prioritize purchase drivers; single-choice questions for demographic profiling; and open-ended items for qualitative insights. This mixed approach allowed for both measurable trends and narrative themes to emerge, enriching the analytical outcomes.

4.2 Sampling Method and Population

The study population consists of Indian Gen Z individuals aged 18–26, with a final sample size of 115 respondents. Participants were selected using **non-probability sampling**, primarily convenience sampling complemented by snowball sampling. These methods were chosen for their feasibility and effectiveness in reaching digitally active Gen Z consumers who frequently interact with fashion brands on social platforms. The respondents represented urban, semi-urban, and student communities, ensuring diversity in socio-economic backgrounds and fashion preferences.

Demographic profiling included age segmentation (18–22, 23–26, and over 26), gender, and educational qualifications (undergraduate, postgraduate, etc.). This data was used not only to describe the sample but also to control for variations in the analysis.

4.3 Validity and Reliability of Data

To ensure methodological rigor, multiple layers of validation were incorporated:

- **Content Validity** was ensured through expert review of the questionnaire, aligning it with previously validated academic constructs.
- **Construct Validity** was enhanced by measuring each concept using multiple indicators, thus capturing its abstract dimensions more comprehensively.

- **Reliability Testing** was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, and the survey yielded a coefficient of **0.805**, indicating strong internal consistency among scale items.

4.4 Data Analysis Tools

Data was analyzed using several statistical tools:

- **Descriptive Statistics** were used to analyze demographic profiles and frequency distributions.
- **Correlation Analysis** helped identify relationships among variables.
- **Multiple Regression Analysis** was employed to evaluate the individual and collective influence of independent variables on consumer attitude and purchasing behavior.
- **Sentiment Analysis** was used to analyze open-ended responses from the pilot interviews, offering qualitative depth.

The integration of both parametric and thematic tools strengthened the study's analytical robustness.

4.5 Methods of Data Collection and Variables of the Study

This research employed a **quantitative methodology** to explore the attitudes, behaviors, and purchasing decisions of Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers in India toward sustainable fashion. The data collection process was carefully designed to ensure the reliability, validity, and relevance of the results in the context of the Indian sustainable fashion landscape.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was conducted in two phases:

Pilot Study (Qualitative Phase): Before finalizing the questionnaire, a **pilot study** was conducted involving in-depth, open-ended interviews with five Gen Z participants aged 18–26. This qualitative phase aimed to gain preliminary insights into: Shopping habits and influencing factors such as price, style, and brand, Awareness and personal definitions of sustainable fashion, Perceived barriers to adoption, Trust in brand communication and green marketing, social perceptions and stigma associated with sustainable fashion. These insights were critically used to refine the language, flow, and relevance of the final questionnaire.

Main Survey (Quantitative Phase): A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed online using platforms like Google Forms, social media, and student communities. A total of 115 valid responses were collected using non-probability sampling techniques—specifically convenience and snowball sampling. The survey featured a mix of: Pre-coded questions for demographic profiling, 5-point Likert scale items to measure constructs such as awareness, attitude, price sensitivity, and trust, ranking questions to assess style and brand preferences, Open-ended questions for nuanced insights, later used for sentiment analysis.

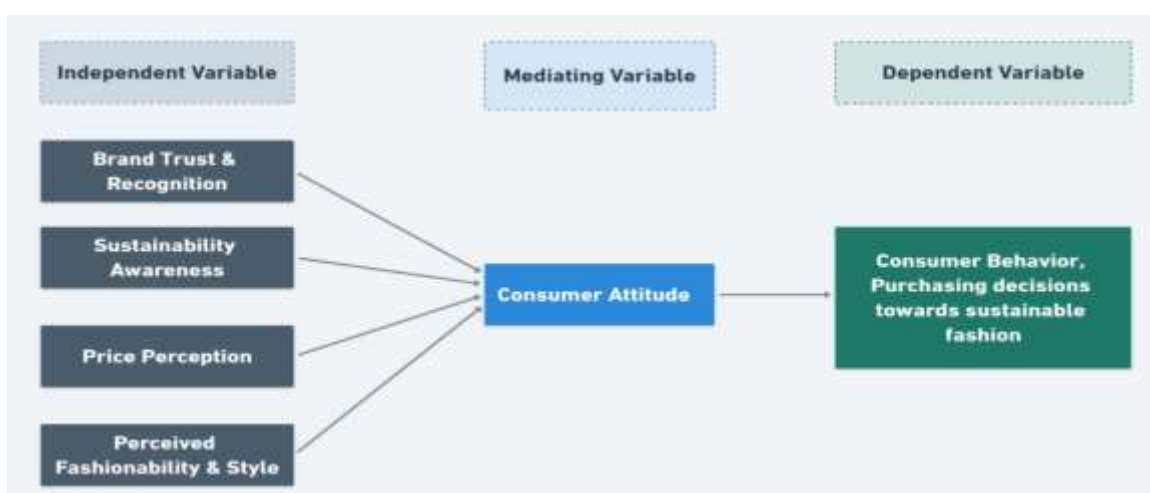
Variables of the Study

This study is anchored in a conceptual framework grounded in behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Customer Satisfaction–Customer Commitment (CSC), and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model. The primary **dependent variable** is *Consumer Behavior and Purchasing Decisions Toward Sustainable Fashion*, which captures the actual buying actions and preferences of Gen Z consumers in the context of sustainability. This includes behaviors such as the frequency of sustainable product purchases, price sensitivity, influence of fashion trends, and the degree to which consumers shift from fast fashion to sustainable alternatives.

The framework also includes one **mediating variable**: *Consumer Attitude Toward Sustainable Fashion*. This variable reflects the general disposition, beliefs, and emotional responses of Gen Z toward eco-friendly fashion. It mediates the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The four **independent variables** are:

1. *Sustainability Awareness* – the level of knowledge Gen Z holds about the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry, including topics like pollution, ethical labor, biodegradable materials, and circular fashion.
2. *Brand Trust & Recognition* – the degree of trust placed in a brand's sustainability claims, particularly in terms of transparency, credibility, and resistance to greenwashing.
3. *Perceived Fashionability & Style* – the extent to which sustainable fashion is viewed as trendy, stylish, and aligned with Gen Z's aesthetic and social expectations.
4. *Price Perception* – how price influences purchasing decisions, including willingness to pay more, perceived affordability, and overall value-for-money.

Additionally, three **control variables**—*Age* (categorized as 18–22, 23–26, and above 26), *Gender*, and *Education Level*—were included to analyze whether the relationships among key variables vary across different Gen Z subgroups. These controls help ensure the validity of the findings by isolating the effect of the primary variables under study.



Pilot Study Outcomes & Sentiment Analysis

The pilot interviews were also analyzed using **sentiment analysis** and **word cloud generation**, revealing emotional trends such as skepticism, price frustration, and aspirational hope. The sentiment breakdown was:

- **Very positive:** 31.87%
- **Moderately positive:** 22.76%
- **Moderately negative:** 34.8%
- **Very negative:** 10.58%



Commonly repeated words in the word cloud included: "style," "expensive," "trust," "trend," "limited colors," and "eco-friendly"—all of which informed the final survey structure.

5. Results, Analysis & Discussion

The study titled "To explore and analyse the attitudes, behaviours, and purchasing decisions of Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers towards sustainable fashion" sought to investigate the multifaceted dynamics influencing Gen Z's interaction with sustainable fashion in the Indian context. Through quantitative analysis of survey data from 115 Gen Z respondents and integration of insights from preliminary qualitative interviews, the research produced several critical findings. The findings from descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and sentiment analysis reveal comprehensive insights into the Gen Z consumer psyche and sustainable fashion.

5.1 Demographic Insights

The demographic analysis revealed that the majority of respondents belonged to the 18–22 age group, with a relatively balanced gender distribution and a significant number holding postgraduate degrees. This reflects a well-informed, digitally connected Gen Z sample that is actively engaged in the fashion consumption landscape.

5.2 Consumer Awareness and Attitude

Gen Z consumers demonstrated high levels of sustainability awareness, particularly regarding the environmental impact of fast fashion. Most respondents agreed that fast fashion contributes to pollution, unethical labor practices, and excessive water use. Two key indicators—understanding of fashion's environmental harm and active seeking of sustainable brand information—were statistically significant predictors of a positive consumer attitude ($p < 0.01$). This affirms the vital role of education and awareness in shaping Gen Z's mindset. Moreover, consumer attitude emerged as a strong mediating variable. Regression results indicated that sustainability awareness and brand trust had the highest influence on attitude ($R^2 = 0.573$), while fashionability and price perception showed weaker associations. The findings validate the assumption that a favorable attitude is significantly driven by environmental consciousness and trust in brands' ethical transparency.

5.3 Behavioural Gap: Attitude vs. Action

Despite their favourable attitude, actual purchasing decisions did not align proportionally. Only a minority frequently purchased sustainable fashion, with most doing so occasionally or rarely. This confirms the existence of an attitude-behaviour gap, a key theme in the literature.

The correlation between consumer attitude and behaviour ($r = 0.325$) was moderate, and the combined regression model of all independent variables and attitude explained just 17.2% of the variance in behaviour, indicating that although positive attitudes exist, they do not translate into strong behavioural change without external enablers.

5.4 Key Influencing Variables

- **Sustainability Awareness:** Showed a weak but directional influence on behaviour ($R^2 = 0.073$), suggesting awareness increases concern but not necessarily action.
- **Brand Trust & Recognition:** Correlated positively with attitude ($r = 0.546$), and emerged as a significant influence in shaping consumer mindset, though its direct impact on behaviour was statistically insignificant ($p = 0.189$).
- **Perceived Fashionability & Style:** Found to have minimal influence on behaviour ($R^2 = 0.014$), but appeared to matter more in shaping perceptions rather than actions.

- **Price Perception:** Showed negligible impact on behaviour ($R^2 = 0.0016$), yet open-ended responses highlighted affordability as a recurring concern, indicating perceived cost remains a psychological barrier.

5.5 Sentiment Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Responses to the open-ended question revealed:

- **66.5% of sentiments were negative** (very or moderately), highlighting key frustrations like high prices, lack of style variety, limited availability, and greenwashing.
- Themes of distrust, cost-sensitivity, and limited accessibility emerged consistently.
- Affordability and awareness were the most cited areas for improvement, indicating clear consumer expectations.

5.6 Correlations Among Variables

Correlation analysis revealed:

- Moderate relationships among certain independent variables, notably sustainability awareness and brand trust ($r = 0.384$), and fashionability and price perception ($r = 0.286$).
- All independent variables showed positive correlation with consumer attitude, confirming the hypothesis H1b.
- However, correlations between independent variables and behaviour (H1c) were generally weaker, reinforcing the challenge of converting awareness into action.

5.7 Regression Analysis Outcomes

Several regression models were employed to examine the direct and combined effects of the variables:

- **H4a–H4d (Individual Effects):** Simple regressions showed that none of the independent variables had a strong or statistically significant individual effect on consumer behaviour. Sustainability awareness ($R^2 = 0.073$) had the highest impact, though weak, followed by brand trust ($R^2 = 0.042$).
- **H2 (Combined Effect on Attitude):** The multiple regression model confirmed that sustainability awareness, brand trust, perceived fashionability, and price perception collectively explained 57.3% of the variance in consumer attitude ($R^2 = 0.573$), with the model being highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This strongly supports the idea that these factors significantly shape how Gen Z thinks about sustainable fashion.
- **H3 (Combined Effect on Behaviour):** When all independent variables and the mediating variable were included to predict consumer behaviour, the model explained 17.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.172$), though it lacked statistical significance ($p = 0.094$). This indicates that while these variables shape attitude, translating that into consistent behavioural outcomes is still a challenge.

5.8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

- **H1a:** Partially Accepted – Some positive correlations observed among independent variables.
- **H1b:** Accepted – All independent variables correlated positively with consumer attitude.
- **H1c:** Partially Accepted – Weak correlations observed with consumer behaviour.
- **H1d:** Accepted – Consumer attitude positively correlated with behaviour.
- **H2:** Accepted – Combined independent variables significantly influenced consumer attitude.
- **H3:** Partially Accepted – Combined independent variables and attitude weakly influenced behaviour.
- **H4a–H4d:** Partially Accepted or Not Supported – Individual variables had weak or statistically insignificant effects on behaviour.

5.9 Conclusion of Findings

While Gen Z consumers are aware and concerned about sustainability, actual behaviour is constrained by price sensitivity, scepticism, limited availability, and lack of trend appeal. Consumer attitude plays a pivotal role in bridging awareness and action but cannot solely drive behaviour without supportive brand strategies.

These findings indicate that brands must build trust, improve affordability, enhance accessibility, and make sustainable fashion more stylish and aspirational. Only then can the industry close the intention-action gap and meaningfully engage Gen Z in driving the future of ethical fashion in India.

In the following sections, we will explore the implications of these findings for brands and policymakers, and offer strategic recommendations to bridge the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable fashion adoption.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to existing literature by validating and extending the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Consumers' Sustainability Consciousness (CSC) Construct, and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model in the context of sustainable fashion consumption among Gen Z in India.

- **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB):** The research reaffirms TPB's relevance in understanding consumer behaviour through attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The findings reinforce that a positive attitude, while crucial, does not necessarily lead to actual behaviour unless supported by enabling conditions such as affordability and availability.
- **Consumers' Sustainability Consciousness (CSC):** The study emphasizes the role of ethical awareness and concern for social and environmental impacts in shaping Gen Z's sustainability consciousness. However, it reveals that high sustainability consciousness alone may not drive behavioural change due to real-world barriers.
- **Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model:** The use of SOR helps unpack how stimuli (e.g., sustainability messaging, influencer content, brand campaigns) influence internal psychological states (attitudes, emotions), which in turn affect behavioural responses. This model successfully explains how Gen Z may cognitively and emotionally process sustainability-related stimuli, yet their behavioural output is often suppressed by cost and product aesthetics.

Overall, the study advances theoretical understanding by confirming the attitude-behaviour gap and demonstrating the need for behavioural interventions and external enablers. It suggests that future behavioural models must integrate psychological constructs with market realities to provide a more accurate picture of sustainable consumption in emerging economies.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The research findings offer valuable insights for fashion brands, marketers, and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable fashion consumption among Gen Z consumers in India. Key managerial implications include:

- **Focus on Attitude Formation and Education:** Brands must invest in educational campaigns that go beyond product features to tell compelling stories about environmental impact, ethical sourcing, and sustainability practices. Awareness alone is not enough—emotional and cognitive alignment is critical.
- **Address the Intention-Behaviour Gap:** Since positive attitude does not guarantee action, brands should deploy behavioural nudges—such as user testimonials, influencer-led content, and peer endorsements—to bridge the gap. Making sustainable choices more visible, accessible, and socially desirable can encourage conversion.

- **Make Sustainability Affordable:** Affordability remains a major barrier. Brands should consider pricing strategies such as student discounts, seasonal offers, or rental/subscription models. Partnerships with local artisans or supply chain innovations could help reduce production costs without compromising quality.
- **Build Authenticity and Trust:** Gen Z values transparency. Brands must clearly communicate their sustainability efforts using third-party certifications, detailed supply chain information, and progress reports. Combat greenwashing by demonstrating real impact.
- **Style Matters—Don't Sacrifice Aesthetics:** Sustainable fashion must also appeal to Gen Z's fashion sensibilities. Incorporating trendy, colourful, and diverse styles into sustainable collections will enhance desirability.
- **Leverage social media and Peer Influence:** Although not a significant factor in regression models, peer influence emerged strongly in open-ended responses. Social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content can serve as powerful tools to promote sustainable fashion narratives.
- **Local Relevance and Cultural Sensitivity:** Indian Gen Z respondents indicated that sustainable fashion lacks regional accessibility and cultural adaptation. Brands must consider localised strategies—such as regional language campaigns, community-driven content, or vernacular design elements—to foster deeper engagement.

By integrating these strategies, businesses can align with Gen Z's sustainability values while addressing practical concerns. These implications serve as a blueprint for brands aspiring to convert sustainability awareness into actual, consistent consumer behaviour and foster long-term loyalty among environmentally conscious youth.

7. Limitations & Scope for Future Research

7.1 Limitations of the Study

Despite the methodological depth and structured approach adopted in this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

- **Sample Size Constraints:** The study involved 115 respondents. While sufficient for exploratory analysis, it may not comprehensively represent the wider Gen Z population across India's diverse socio-cultural and economic contexts.
- **Sampling Bias:** The use of convenience and snowball sampling—mainly through digital channels—means that participants were predominantly urban, tech-savvy, and socially connected. This may exclude views from less-connected Gen Z cohorts, particularly those in rural areas or lower digital penetration zones.
- **Geographic and Demographic Limitations:** Most respondents came from metropolitan or tier-1 cities and had access to higher education. Thus, the insights may not reflect the perceptions and behaviours of Gen Z consumers in semi-urban or rural regions, who might have different challenges and fashion priorities.
- **Self-Reported Data:** The study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, especially when discussing sustainability. Respondents may overstate their ethical intentions or underreport fast fashion purchases.
- **Cross-Sectional Nature:** The study was conducted at a single point in time. Consumer attitudes and behaviours evolve, especially in fast-changing environments like fashion. A longitudinal study would provide better insights into behavioural shifts over time.

7.2 Potential for Further Research

Building on this study's insights, several areas emerge as promising avenues for future research:

- **Social Influence and Peer Norms:** Though not statistically significant in this study, qualitative responses highlight the role of peer influence. Future research could quantitatively investigate the impact of peer dynamics, influencer culture, and social identity on sustainable fashion choices.

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Tracking Gen Z's sustainable fashion behaviour over time would offer richer insights into changing attitudes, especially as income levels, responsibilities, and market offerings evolve.
- **Cross-Cultural and Regional Comparisons:** Comparative studies between urban and rural Gen Z consumers, or across different states and cultural backgrounds in India, can illuminate context-specific motivators or barriers.
- **Experimental Designs:** Behavioural experiments—such as A/B testing of marketing strategies or interventions like nudges—can help identify the most effective techniques to influence sustainable purchasing.
- **Inclusion of Additional Variables:** Future studies could explore factors like product quality perception, emotional branding, sustainability labelling, and digital engagement to deepen the behavioural model.
- **Focus on Supply-Side Factors:** While this study is consumer-centric, examining brand-side challenges (e.g., production cost barriers, design constraints, supply chain limitations) could provide a more holistic understanding of the ecosystem.

8. Conclusion

This research sought to explore and analyse the attitudes, behaviours, and purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers toward sustainable fashion in the Indian context. The findings reveal a generation that is environmentally conscious, digitally aware, and ethically inclined, yet challenged by affordability, accessibility, and aesthetic concerns when making sustainable fashion choices.

While sustainability awareness and brand trust significantly shape attitudes, these positive perceptions do not always translate into consistent behaviour. The presence of an attitude-behaviour gap indicates that structural factors—like pricing, availability, and style—play a critical role in the final purchase decision. The role of consumer attitude as a mediating variable also underscores the importance of psychological alignment in fostering ethical consumption. From a theoretical standpoint, the study strengthens existing behavioural models and highlights the importance of bridging cognitive beliefs with tangible motivators. For fashion brands and policymakers, the research offers actionable guidance: align messaging with Gen Z values, make sustainable fashion more aspirational, and address practical barriers to adoption. Ultimately, the future of sustainable fashion in India depends on the ability of businesses and institutions to convert awareness into action, not just through campaigns—but by creating ecosystems where sustainability is both desirable and accessible.

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