

Discrepancy Between Perception and Action in Sustainable Fashion Among Young Female Consumers in the United States

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This study aims to expand on the growing research on the disconnect between consumer perception and behavior by surveying teenage female consumers, a group that has not been focused on in the study of sustainable fashion in the United States. It studies how the perception and attitude of young female consumers impact their behavior towards environmentally sustainable fashion. The research is conducted using a survey distributed via social media that received 92 responses from participants in the United States. The questionnaire is written based on previous research in the field to measure the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels of consumers related to sustainable fashion. Using the theory of planned behavior, the study operates on the idea that attitude and intentions are interconnected when consumers choose to make decisions. Yet, there was a disconnect between the concerns of consumers as well as their planned actions largely due to knowledge gaps. The study found that most participants are aware of the issues that exist within the clothing industry relating to the environment. However, only a small number of those who filled out the survey intend to take action by purchasing sustainable products. Many suggested that they have trouble distinguishing which fashion products are sustainable and therefore are unable to act. Low levels of knowledge prevent people from buying sustainable products even when they have concerns. Despite the fact that most participants are worried about environmental issues, they do not seem to have intentions to physically take actions that align with their cognition. Within the category of those who do, most of them appear to feel the need to take action but have not done so. The findings suggest that fashion retailers should be more vocal and prominent in informing consumers which items are environmentally sustainable. By improving their marketing strategies, people who already acknowledge these issues will be more compelled to take action as it will be easier and more attainable.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, the fashion industry has evolved and developed as patterns have changed to satisfy the needs of consumers in terms of price, quality, design, and speed^{1,2}. To meet these increasing demands, new branches of the industry, such as fast fashion, have been established³. Fast fashion is characterized by fast turnaround times and cheap prices in order to keep up with current trends^{4,5}. The efficiency and low prices of these companies lead to poor working conditions and unethical methods of production⁴. These new extensions aim to allow faster turnaround times and cheaper prices, which provide people with pieces of lower-quality clothing¹. The fashion industry is the most significant contributor to the ongoing fashion crisis as it accounts for more than 10% of the carbon emissions emitted⁶. During the production process, water is required to produce textiles. In 2019, the apparel industry was the second-greatest user of water⁷. As the fashion and textile industries are becoming more global, the aftermath of the impact on the environment is not equal across the world, affecting mostly developing countries⁸. In order to produce textiles, over 15,000 chemicals are used in the process⁹. These textiles are often discarded even before they reach the consumer,

becoming pre-consumer textile waste. Post-consumer textile waste, meanwhile, refers to the discarding of clothing after it is in the hands of the consumers. In the United States, between 1999 and 2009, there was a 40 percent increase in textile waste in part due to the new fast fashion trends. Yet, it was not until after the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 that concern for both ethical and sustainability issues grew greatly¹⁰. Since consumers play a significant role in driving policies that ensure sustainability, it is vital to consider their perspectives and behavior toward the clothing industry as a whole¹¹. Despite the dramatic changes in the fashion industry, there is still limited research on consumer perceptions, especially within the younger generation, who will soon be the main focus of the industry^{3,11}. Additionally, most studies have focused on identifying influences and factors that hinder consumers from purchasing sustainable fashion rather than those that drive them to do so¹².

Compared to consumers fifteen years ago, consumers today buy 60 percent more clothing items⁷. Knowledge is one of the most influential aspects that impact the decisions and attitudes of consumers toward sustainable fashion¹³. For the purpose of this study, sustainable fashion is understood to include three aspects: the environmental impact in terms of material and production process, the ethicality, and slower production times to prevent

overproduction¹³. In other words, each step of the production, consumption, and disposal process of sustainable fashion items are done so in a way that minimizes its negative impact on the environment and moral destruction. Despite the fact that people have a general knowledge or claim they are “concerned” about how environmentally friendly clothing is, they will not necessarily purchase items that align with that belief¹⁴. Many consumers of fast fashion acknowledge the various issues around fast fashion, including sizing, ethical issues, and quality¹¹. Yet, they claim they will continue purchasing fast fashion items due to their low price point, which arises as a critical motivating point in many people’s purchasing decisions¹¹. Vice versa, people who often purchase sustainable items do not even realize they do so unconsciously¹³. The reason for this is that many marketers do not fully advertise the environmental sustainability of their clothing line, which may be one of the factors holding consumers back¹¹. Many consumers claimed that major fast fashion companies, such as HM and Zara, are undoubtedly unethical but could be environmentally sustainable despite the consumer’s beliefs¹³. Despite the fact that fast fashion companies are aiming to become more environmentally sustainable, consumers are not fully onboard with the new ideas due to their lack of personal connection to the issues¹⁵. Often, consumers who perceive the social responsibility of fast fashion companies positively are more likely to purchase from them due to their increased trust in their commitment to sustainability^{11, 16}. For others, they may feel the need to purchase sustainable clothing in order to feel a sense of individualization and uniqueness¹⁷.

Purchasing decisions also vary largely and are motivated by varying factors across different demographic groups. For most consumers, price still remains a concern when shopping for clothes⁴. However, compared to women, men tend to be more willing to spend money on purchasing sustainable clothing¹⁴. Women tend to focus more on how the clothing aligns with their style and self-confidence⁴. Along with the price of items, the age of consumers also shows a strong influence on the percentage of their monthly income they are willing to spend on clothing¹⁸. Whereas young consumers with higher family income tend to spend their money on clothing, those with both a higher family income and smaller family size purchase more fast fashion items¹⁸. Cultural background and country of residence seemed to influence how concerned consumers were with environmental sustainability partly due to social norms⁴.

The study invokes the Theory of Planned Behavior, which is the linking between attitude and planned or predicted behavior toward subjects. Despite critiques about the validity of the theory on some subjects, it has been largely effective in terms of sustainability studies¹⁹. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, intentions based on an individual’s perspective toward certain subjects ultimately dictate their behavior²⁰. However, a person’s perspective does not always directly impact their

intentions as demonstrated through this study. In other words, it is built on the foundation of the assumption that one’s behavior is made based on their knowledge and aims. In order to determine intent, the influence of personal norms and beliefs is a major component to consider. Another factor that plays a part in planned behavior is one’s past actions and experiences in relation to the current ones²¹. On average, many individuals tend to learn from their own experiences and actions²⁰. Moreover, people usually make decisions based on the amount of self-efficacy or control they have²⁰. Combined, these factors as well as their knowledge impact the intentions and behaviors of consumers¹⁴.

Blazquez, Henninger, Alexander, and Franquesa (2020) utilized a similar underpinning of the Theory of Planned Behavior to study the relationship between perception and intended behavior in Spanish consumers¹³. The study shows that both the knowledge and intentions of consumers in Spain were high in terms of friendliness in relation to the environment and ethics. This study uses the theory in a similar way to attempt to predict how consumers in the United States plan to behave. To date, much research has been conducted in various countries across Europe and Asia while data collection lags behind in the United States^{13, 4, 12}. For instance, in the Blazquez, Henninger, Alexander, and Franquesa (2020) study conducted in Spain, the participants seemed to understand the issues surrounding how environmentally sustainable their purchase decisions are but did not believe that the decisions they make affect the wider industry significantly¹³. Across the mostly millennial population in the United Kingdom, most consumers claimed to be more knowledgeable of the environmental friendliness of fashion products than they actually were⁴. The study reemphasizes the need to focus on educating consumers on their understanding of sustainability. In China, the degree to which Generation Z consumers were impacted by personal preferences and their knowledge of sustainability¹². Contrary to previous findings across gender, the study found that females were more concerned with the environmental friendliness of clothing. Currently, in the United States, minimal studies have shed light on Generation Z and their attitude as well as behavior toward fast fashion. Young Americans understand the sustainability issues that exist within the fashion industry. For some, they may be leaning towards making more eco-conscious decisions in part due to their peers. Hence, in order to truly address knowledge gaps, similar research must be completed in different countries due to cross-cultural differences^{13, 16}. Current studies focus primarily on the middle-aged to younger population of consumers, especially those in college. There is still a lack of data on how Generation Z, including young adults and teenagers, perceive the sustainable fashion industry⁴. This generation of people tends to possess more passion for environmental and social issues and therefore act in ways that align with their beliefs^{22, 23}. In terms of the United States, current studies focus on more specific cases, such as Vinted, an online marketplace for secondhand items,

rather than the entire fashion industry¹⁴. The age ranges that are included in these studies also differ widely rather than only focusing on the younger generation¹⁴.

Addressing all the above-mentioned gaps, this research will focus on young female consumers, aged fifteen to twenty, in the United States. The paper aims to explore how the perception and attitude of young female consumers aged between fifteen and twenty impact their behavior towards sustainable fashion in the United States. The second section underlines the approach used to answer the question by describing the methods, especially the survey, in detail. The third and fourth sections are based on the results from the form to discuss the findings and implications of the research.

Results

In order to effectively analyze the data, basic statistical analysis is utilized to understand the perception and behavior of young female consumers towards sustainable fashion in the United States. This section is separated into three different subsections, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

In order to effectively analyze the data, it is vital to keep the demographic of those surveyed in mind. Figures 1 and 2 present the age group and geographical location of participants.

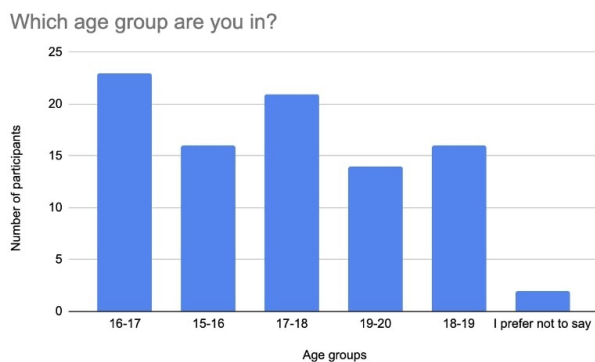


Figure 1: Age groups of participants

Cognitive

The first subsection refers to the extent to which the participants' knowledge of environmental sustainability in the fashion industry stretches⁴. Their current awareness and understanding of the presence of environmental friendliness within the clothing industry is measured. In the survey, Q1, Q3, Q4, and Q5 directly force those filling out the survey to demonstrate their previous knowledge in the field. Most consumers, especially those younger than eighteen or older than nineteen, who filled out the survey claim to have a fairly high level of awareness of environmental issues in the fashion industry (Q1, Table 1).

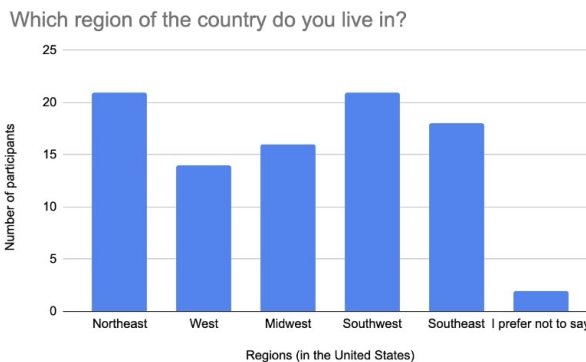


Figure 2: Regional location of participants in the United States

Similarly, around the same percentage claimed they have the same amount of recognition of sustainability issues in the fast fashion industry (Q4, Table 3). However, in terms of knowing exactly which brands produced sustainable clothing, the majority claimed to have little amount of knowledge (Q3, Table 2). While the survey responses of the consumers provide a rough idea of their understanding, there is a difference in the awareness that they claim they have compared to the actual knowledge they possess. In general, less than a quarter of the participants knew which fabric was the most environmentally sustainable (Q5). The distribution of the participants that chose respectively cotton, wool, and modal, was fairly even (Q5, Figure 3). The correct answer in this case was modal.

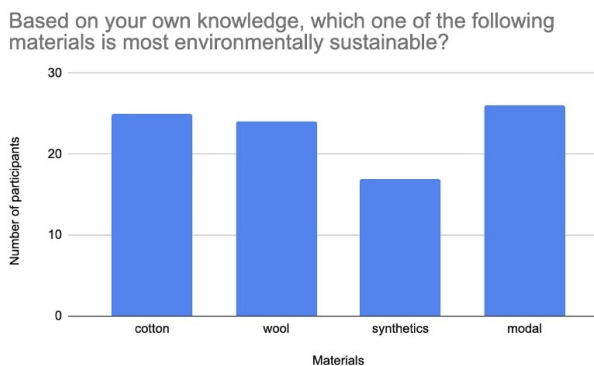


Figure 3: Responses to the question asking which of the following materials is most environmentally sustainable (Q5)

Emotional

The second subsection explores the feelings attached to the consumer's perception of environmentally friendly fashion. The connection between emotions and the behavior of purchasing decisions is studied. The questions that relate to the affective aspect are Q2 and Q9. Most people claimed to have come to a fairly high amount of concern for environmental issues

Table 1. Likert responses to Q1: “I am aware of the environmental issues in the fashion industry such as waste and pollution caused by clothing production.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%	1.10%
2	18.75%	17.39%	14.29%	37.50%	28.57%	0.00%	21.70%
3	31.25%	17.39%	28.57%	31.25%	7.14%	0.00%	22.80%
4	37.50%	65.21%	52.38%	18.75%	35.71%	100.00%	46.70%
5	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	21.43%	0.00%	7.60%

Table 2. Likert responses to Q3: “I am knowledgeable about the apparel brands that sell environmentally sustainable fashion products.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	8.70%	19.05%	31.25%	7.14%	0.00%	13.00%
2	56.25%	47.83%	28.57%	50.00%	21.42%	0.00%	40.20%
3	25%	26.09%	28.57%	12.50%	35.71%	100%	27.20%
4	18.75%	17.39%	19.05%	6.25%	28.57%	0.00%	17.40%
5	0.00%	0.00%	4.76%	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%	2.20%

Table 3. Likert responses to Q4: “I recognize the environmental sustainability issues that exist within the fast fashion industry including including chemicals and pollution caused by the excessive production of clothing.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	0.00%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.10%
2	0.00%	21.74%	19.05%	25%	28.57%	50.00%	19.60%
3	31.25%	34.78%	28.57%	43.75%	21.43%	50.00%	32.60%
4	50.00%	34.78%	42.86%	18.75%	42.86%	0.00%	37.00%
5	18.75%	8.70%	4.76%	12.50%	7.14%	0.00%	9.80%

in the fashion industry (Q2, Table 4). The consumers who participated in the study felt mildly to fairly disgusted by how much environmental damage was caused by the fashion industry (Q9, Table 5).

Behavioral

The behavioral dimension refers to decisions made, and actions carried about consumers in relation to purchasing fashion products that are sustainable. While the outcome is explored, the driving forces behind why these decisions are made are not explicitly studied in this research. At the same time, many factors, such as economic status and social background, can come into play when looking at actions¹⁴. As previously mentioned, the emotional response of consumers can greatly impact their purchasing decisions. In the survey, Q6, Q8, Q10, and Q11 assess the actions taken by consumers towards sustainable fashion products.

Considering the fact that most participants claimed that the price of clothing was a minor or medium concern for them, they were willing to pay up to 10-25% more for sustainable clothing (Q7, Q8, Figure 5, & Figure 6). Within their current closet, the majority of the participants (58.7%) claimed that anywhere between one to ten percent of their clothing is environmentally friendly (Q6, Figure 4). While most claimed to be interested in purchasing from fashion companies that have sustainability initiatives, they only feel slightly honored when engaging in transactions with them (Q10, Q11, Table 6, & Table 7).

Q6

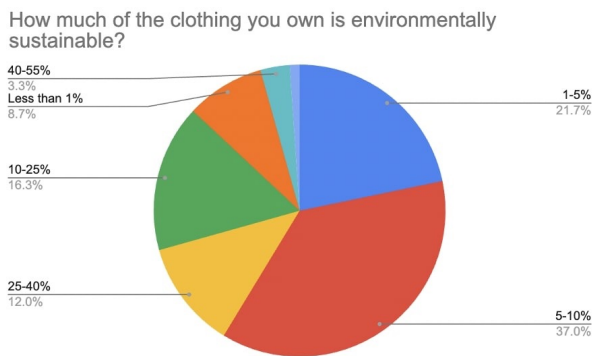


Figure 4: Responses to the question asking how much of the clothing the participants own is environmentally sustainable (Q6)

Discussion

In terms of the cognitive dimension, the age and location of the consumers do not play a significant role, as found by other studies¹⁴. Across all the questions included in the

Q7

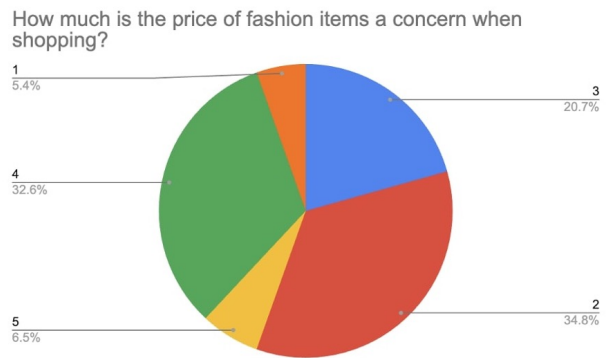


Figure 5: Responses to the question asking how much price is a concern when shopping with 1 being not at all and 5 being very much (Q7)

Q8

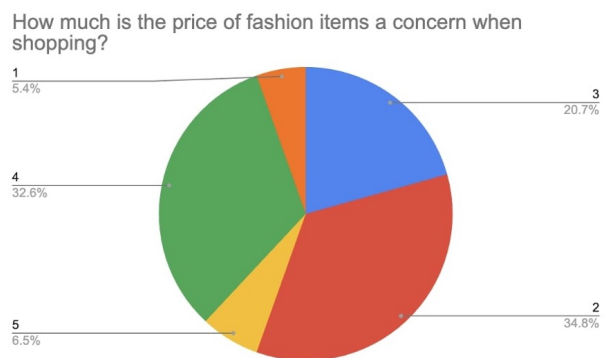


Figure 6: Responses to the question asking how much more percent of the original price of an item you would pay if it were marked as environmentally sustainable (Q8)

survey, participants claimed to have a minimal to moderate understanding of environmentally sustainable fashion. While around thirty to fifty percent of participants claimed to recognize and understand environmental issues within the clothing industry, only around a quarter of them knew which material was sustainable. Therefore, the survey demonstrates that consumers believe they have a higher level of understanding than they do of environmentally sustainable fashion. In other words, the way most consumers perceive sustainability in the fashion industry is different from its reality¹¹. According to the results of the survey, understanding of issues within the fast fashion industry appeared to be around ten percent lower than that of the clothing industry as a whole. In order to promote an accurate understanding of these environmental sustainability issues in the fashion industry, the government should put laws and regulations²⁴. Within the media, sustainability issues should be accentuated as a pressing and prominent problem through

Table 4. Likert responses to Q2: “I am concerned about the environmental issues in the fashion industry such as waste and pollution caused by production.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	4.35%	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%	2.20%
2	0.00%	21.74%	19.05%	6.25%	21.43%	100.00%	16.30%
3	62.50%	34.78%	38.10%	50.00%	42.85%	0.00%	43.50%
4	25.00%	34.78%	28.57%	25.00%	35.71%	0.00%	29.30%
5	25.00%	4.35%	14.29%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	8.70%

Table 5. Likert responses to Q9: “I feel disgusted when I learn about how much waste and pollution are generated by the fashion industry.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2	6.25%	17.39%	19.05%	25.00%	21.43%	0.00%	17.40%
3	31.25%	34.78%	28.57%	31.25%	14.29%	50.00%	29.30%
4	37.50%	30.43%	38.10%	37.50%	50.00%	50.00%	38.00%
5	25%	17.39%	14.29%	6.25%	14.29%	0.00%	15.20%

Table 6. Likert responses to Q10: “I feel interested in a fashion brand that engages in promoting sustainability.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	0.00%	4.35%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.10%
2	18.75%	13.04%	28.57%	31.25%	14.29%	0.00%	20.70%
3	25.00%	30.43%	23.80%	37.50%	42.86%	0.00%	30.40%
4	56.25%	43.48%	28.57%	25.00%	42.86%	100.00%	40.20%
5	0.00%	8.70%	19.05%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%	7.60%

Table 7. Likert responses to Q11: “I feel honored if I choose a fashion brand that is environmentally sustainable.”

Scale	Age group						All
	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	I prefer not to say	
1	6.25%	8.70%	9.52%	6.25%	7.14%	0.00%	7.60%
2	25.00%	21.40%	42.86%	37.50%	42.86%	50.00%	33.70%
3	31.25%	34.78%	9.52%	31.25%	28.57%	0.00%	26.10%
4	25.00%	17.39%	23.81%	28.57%	21.43%	50.00%	22.80%
5	12.50%	17.39%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.80%

increased coverage and discussion in order to foster a sense of urgency for the understanding of the significance of sustainable fashion. According to previous research, whether consumers are conscious about it or not, their purchasing decisions are influenced by their environment²⁵. Hence, increased promotion of environmental education in the fashion industry on the Internet and in person will likely increase the purchasing of sustainable fashion. Consumers should actively try to understand the impact of their fashion decisions on not only themselves but the health of the planet as a whole.

While almost half of the participants claimed to be knowledgeable about environmental problems that exist in the fashion industry, an even greater overall percentage showed emotional concern. Hence, it suggests that despite having worrisome feelings towards the issue, many consumers do not fully understand them, which makes it increasingly challenging to take action. Being overwhelmed by the scope of the fashion industry that is unsustainable may also play a role in consumer's lack of action as included in Q2 and Q9. In terms of age, age groups 18-19 and 19-20 showed slightly more concern towards environmental sustainability in the clothing industry. Similar to the cognitive component, there are no trends based on geographical location in the emotional dimension of the study. As mentioned above, a correct understanding of environmentally sustainable fashion should be more accessible to people as they may show concern for the issue but find no way to address it. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behavior does not remain accurate in this case because the discrepancy between perception and actions comes from the consumer's level of knowledge. While many young female consumers claimed they were knowledgeable about sustainable fashion, the majority claimed that less than ten percent of their closet consisted of it. The finding remains consistent with previous research conducted in Spain, which found that intentions do not always translate to actions¹³. The issue may also stem from a lack of alternatives to unsustainable fashion products, especially those from the fast fashion industry⁷. Nevertheless, perceptions and attitudes undoubtedly have some influence on the purchasing behavior of consumers¹³. Unlike intentions, the behavior of younger age groups, especially those under 18, tend to take more action than young adults⁴. Geographical location continues to play a minimal role in determining the extent to which consumers contribute to sustainable fashion. By being more vocal, brands are building a foundation for trust between consumers, which will then allow them to further promote sustainable products¹⁶. Producers do not necessarily play a crucial role in expanding the economic range of sustainable clothing, which can serve as a barrier for those who are not able financially to spend a large portion of their income on fashion.

Methodology

A quantitative tool was employed to answer the research question. This tool utilizes a realistic and straightforward approach to understanding the attitude of consumers by collecting data through a customized questionnaire based on the surveys conducted by⁴ and¹³. Both the Schwartz's Value Scale (1992) or Yoon's Sustainability Awareness Index (2017) were not ultimately utilized because they do not tailor to the specific needs of studying sustainable behavioral intentions of clothing consumers. The questions in the survey are attached in the appendix. To gain a well-rounded perspective, environmental issues in both the general fashion industry and the fast fashion branch were considered when designing the survey. The questions aim to capture a pragmatic view of how young female consumers view and approach sustainability in the fashion industry by examining their thoughts as well as habits. Designed to address gaps in previous research, the questionnaire uncovers consumers' psychological attitudes and preferences for sustainable clothing using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), as well as close-ended multiple-choice questions. The use of Likert scales is common in research related to sustainable fashion, particularly those investigating consumers' attitudes and knowledge (see, for example, references 18-20). A five-point Likert scale generally has higher reliability and an enhanced response rate²⁶. The chosen platform for creating the survey was Google Forms, as it is an accessible platform for everyone with internet access and is thus easy to administer. In total, 92 valid responses were collected and utilized. The survey itself takes approximately five minutes to complete- it does not require the participant to physically type in their responses. Hence, it is more convenient and quicker for participants to fill out. Before distributing the survey, ethical approval was obtained via a school-level Institutional Review Board from the Hill School, Pennsylvania, United States, as the research concerned itself with the study of human participants, particularly minors. Consisting of an individual certified to assess psychological risks, a science teacher, and a school administrator, they reviewed all aspects of the survey before it was shared with others. As the research's target includes minors under the age of eighteen, there was a section in the survey that ensured all non-adults obtained parental consent before filling out the survey. Underage participants were asked to share a parental consent form, also prepared using Google Forms, with their parents/guardians. Hence, it addresses the issue of dealing with minors who are not able to make their own decisions. Moreover, in order to address the issue of an uneven number of survey responses and parental consent, initials of the names of the respondents were collected, to tag each response from an underage participant with their parent or guardian's signed consent form. Any response by a minor that did not have an associated signed consent from their

parent or guardian was discarded.

There are no physical or mental risks associated with the survey as it focuses on the participants' views and behaviors toward environmentally sustainable fashion, which is usually not a sensitive subject. The questions in the survey merely measure the perception, knowledge, and actions of the respondents as to the environmental friendliness of the fashion industry.

The survey was advertised via mass social media, especially Twitter. Several posts were made to encourage eligible participants around the world to participate in the research. There was a constant emphasis on the fact that participating in the survey was completely optional, and any participation was voluntary in nature. Participants were also informed that they could stop filling out the form at any time with no consequences.

Only the responses from those who identified as female between the ages of fifteen and twenty living in the United States were valid and utilized. In the survey, the participants are prompted to ensure they fit the criteria of the target audience, which is female consumers between fifteen and twenty, living in the United States, and identifying as female consumers.

Throughout the entire process, the anonymity of the participants was strictly maintained. The only personal data collected by the survey was related to demographics, including their age range and geographic location in the United States. Initials of the names of the respondents were also collected for the reasons described above. No other personal identifiers were collected and used, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured with the utmost priority. The data was analyzed in the context of the demographics, not the specific people. The results of the survey are stored securely in the Google platform and transferred to Excel. The data was only available to the researcher.

In this study, Google Forms and Sheets were used to analyze the data. In addition, graphs, including bar graphs, were created by the platform to compare the answers from people of different ages and areas, as well as synthesize the findings of the survey.

Conclusion

In order to explore the attitude and behavior of young female consumers aged between fifteen and twenty toward environmentally sustainable fashion in the United States, this study employed a questionnaire tool administered online. The form was developed on the basis of previous research to effectively capture the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of those who participated in the study. Statistical analysis accompanied by visuals was primarily utilized to understand the results of the survey. The main findings of the survey are summarized below.

Based on the results of the survey, there is a clear mismatch between perceived awareness and actual knowledge. Although many consumers claim to be educated about the topic of

sustainable fashion, they demonstrated a lack of knowledge when asked to identify which material was most sustainable. The inconsistency suggests an even deeper issue regarding consumer overconfidence and misinformation from the society around them. Hence, the Theory of Planned Behavior does not hold true because one's perspective towards an issue is also significantly impacted by their knowledge. Based on the results of the survey, several implications can be drawn from the research to encourage sustainable fashion within the industry. Since consumers often have trouble distinguishing which products are environmentally sustainable, fashion companies should be more vocal and direct in their promotion of sustainable clothing products. It may be useful for producers to market the clothing through various means, including online campaigns and in-person advertisements. Producers should also be aware that most consumers are only willing to pay at most 25% more of the original price for sustainable items. If environmentally friendly clothing suffers a greater increase in price, only a small percentage of consumers would be interested in purchasing the items. In terms of consumers, most claim to be more knowledgeable than they are in terms of understanding sustainability within the clothing industry. If there is an increase in effective education about environmental friendliness in the fashion industry, consumers will have the ability to make more sustainable purchase decisions. Yet, it is vital to recognize that knowledge does not translate to direct actions⁴. Hence, both producers and policymakers need to act by creating new laws that encourage the purchase of sustainable clothing as well as implement enticing new marketing strategies.

This paper still has several limitations that need to be addressed in future studies to better explore the topic. One of them includes the limited width of the data coverage, also referred to as the number of participants, included in the research. Due to the time constraints of the paper, only the responses of 92 young female consumers across the United States were included in the research. While the sample size of this particular study is on the smaller side, it was still large enough to gain a new perspective on the perspective of consumers. The age group of those who filled out the survey leaned towards the younger side as most of them were under the age of eighteen. In terms of geographical location, there were notably fewer consumers from the West Coast that participated in the research. According to the responses to the survey, the majority of the participants had little to no economic concern, which can ultimately shape their view on environmentally sustainable fashion. The ability to spend more of their income on clothing gives them more freedom and less worry when purchasing. The research focused on a small scoop of female rather than male consumers, which does not allow for comparison. Female and male consumer tend to possess different motives for their fashion purchasing decisions⁴. Expanding the coverage of the ages of the participants will bring in various

perspectives¹³. However, as this study focuses on a specific age group, the results are more applicable and reliable to them in particular. Future studies should also employ qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, to further explore the topic. They will provide another perspective to study the perception and behavior of consumers toward sustainable fashion by bringing new insights into the emotional dimension¹³. This study also exclusively employs simple statistical analysis due to lack of available resources and experience. Future studies should utilize statistical techniques, including regression analysis and structural equation modeling, to explore the relation between perception and intended behavior of young American female consumers in terms of sustainable fashion.

Acknowledgments

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Ethical Approval

This study was granted ethical approval by the Hill School's institutional review board.

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Appendix

Questionnaire: The attitude and behavior of young female consumers in the United States towards sustainable fashion

Introduction

You are being invited to participate in a survey for a research paper. The study is based on the perception of young female consumers living in the United States towards sustainable fashion, including fast fashion. Through gathering data from people like you, the study will be able to utilize data to analyze the behavior of these consumers towards the sustainable aspect of the industry.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences.

You may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the survey as only demographics (age and region) are collected on a voluntary basis. Only the organizer of the research project will have access to the responses.

If you are under 18, do you have parental/guardian consent to complete the form?

- YES, I have parental consent. My parents will fill out the form linked below.
- NO, I don't have parental consent. If so, please do not complete the form below.
- I am over 18.

If you are under 18, please put your initials below.

If you are under 18, please ask your parents to complete the form below. [click here to fill out the form.](#)

Do you consent to your anonymous response being used in the research?

- YES, I consent.
- NO, I don't consent.

Do you confirm you are:

- a female consumer
- 15-20
- living in the United States
 - YES, I do meet the requirements
 - NO, I don't meet the requirements.

Demographics

Which age group are you in?

- 15-16
- 16-17
- 17-18
- 18-19
- 19-20
- I prefer not to say

Which region of the country do you live in? *

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Southwest
- Midwest
- West
- I prefer not to say

The Environment and the Fashion Industry

Q1. I am aware of the environmental issues in the fashion industry such as waste and pollution caused by clothing production.

- 1 (Not at all)

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q2. I am concerned about the environmental issues in the fashion industry such as waste and pollution caused by production.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q3. I am knowledgeable about the apparel brands that sell environmentally sustainable fashion products.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q4. I recognize the environmental sustainability issues that exist within the fast fashion industry including chemicals and pollution caused by the excessive production of clothing.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q5. Based on your own knowledge, which one of the following materials is most environmentally sustainable?

- Cotton
- Wool
- Modal
- Synthetics

Q6. How much of the clothing you own is environmentally sustainable?

- less than 1%
- 1-5%
- 5-10
- 10-25%
- 25-40%
- 40-55%
- Over 55%

Q7. How much is the price of fashion items a concern when shopping?

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q8. How much more percent of the original price of an item would you pay if it is marked as environmentally sustainable?

-
- a. less than 1%
 - b. 1-5%
 - c. 5-10
 - d. 10-25%
 - e. 25-40%
 - f. 40-55%
 - g. Over 55%

Q9. I feel disgusted when I learn about how much waste and pollution are generated by the fashion industry.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q10. I feel interested in a fashion brand that engages in promoting sustainability.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)

Q11. I feel honored if I choose a fashion brand that is environmentally sustainable.

- 1 (Not at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very much)