

Gen Z and Sustainable Fashion Awareness: A Quick Survey

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the understanding and attitudes of Generation Z students at Bengkulu University towards sustainable fashion. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of consumer knowledge, attitudes, willingness to pay more, and purchase intentions related to environmentally friendly fashion products. This study uses quantitative descriptive techniques and is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Thirty-four students from various faculties were given an online questionnaire to fill out in order to collect data. The results show that respondents have a positive view of environmentally friendly products and a high level of knowledge about sustainable fashion. The highest average score was obtained for purchase intention, indicating a strong tendency to encourage the adoption of sustainable fashion. However, the moderate level of willingness to pay more shows that economic considerations limit the conversion of awareness into actual purchasing activities. The results reveal a striking mismatch between financial reality and sustainability goals. Overall, students exhibit a type of pragmatic environmentalism that balances pragmatic economic considerations with ecological concerns. This study concludes that young students' attitudes, knowledge, and purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion are all well explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

One industry that has a major impact on environmental issues is the global fashion industry. Approximately 18.6 million tons of textile waste are disposed of in landfills each year, and on average, buyers discard up to 60% of their clothes within a year of purchase, according to a report by Young, (2020). The fast fashion movement, which prioritizes low prices and speed of production but has a negative impact on environmental sustainability, is directly responsible for this pattern of rapid consumption. Pires et al., (2024) state that although global awareness of sustainability challenges is increasing, lifestyle factors and lower prices continue to have a greater influence on consumer behavior than sustainability idealism. In this context, the concept of sustainable fashion has emerged as an alternative that emphasizes social responsibility, resource efficiency, and ethical considerations in the fashion sector.

The same thing is happening in Indonesia, which is the fifth largest waste producer in the world, behind China, the United States, India, and Brazil, with a production of 65.2 million tons in 2022 (Rizqiyah, 2023). According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry SIPSN, (2020), Indonesia's textile sector uses more than 93 billion cubic meters of water annually, and textile waste accounts for 2.87% of the country's total waste, or 1.75 million tons per year. Additionally, around 60% of Indonesian clothing is made from synthetic materials that are difficult to recycle (Muhammad Fasmi Trisnadi, 2025). Consumer habits, especially in terms of clothing, have increased the amount of used clothing that is discarded, even though fabric waste only accounts for 2.5% of the total waste volume (SIPSN, 2020). These figures show that sustainability issues in the fashion industry are not only a global problem, but also a significant obstacle in Indonesia, especially for the younger generation who are the determinants of consumption trends.

Generation Z, or those born between 1997 and 2012, have become increasingly interested in sustainable fashion in recent years. Generation Z has been exposed to digital information and environmental issues around the world since childhood. They tend to choose sustainable companies and products because they have directly witnessed the impact of climate change and unethical industrial activities. According to Tedswell, (2023), most Gen Zers around the world show a high level of concern for sustainability, but there is still a value-action gap, which is the gap between their beliefs about sustainability and their actual actions when purchasing fashion products (Vlastelica et al., 2023). This phenomenon is evident in Indonesia through the widespread use of secondhand clothing and the thrifting movement among Generation

Z. Although environmentally friendly, this does not accurately reflect a deep understanding of the environment (Nuh et al., 2023). In other words, Generation Z's consumption patterns do not accurately reflect their level of environmental awareness.

Numerous studies have been conducted in response to this situation in an effort to identify elements that can help bridge the gap between awareness and action. According to research by Zahra et al., (2025), intention Purchasing sustainable fashion products is positively influenced by environmental understanding and fashion awareness. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Puty Febriasari P et al., (2025) Meanwhile, a study conducted by Febriasari et al. (2023) shows that customer

awareness and environmental concern are very important in shaping positive opinions about environmentally friendly products. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that a positive attitude towards an activity is the main determinant of the intention to do it, attitudes towards sustainable products also play a significant role. This is supported by the findings of Penz & Drewes, (2022), which show that the intention to purchase environmentally friendly products is significantly influenced by pro-environmental feelings. Customers' willingness to spend more money, or their willingness to pay more for sustainable and ethical products, is another determining factor (Pires et al., 2024).

Most of these studies only look at a few factors without considering how customer attitudes, knowledge, and willingness to pay more influence consumers' intentions to buy sustainable products. In addition, the research environment is still limited to large cities with relatively high purchasing power, awareness, and access to information. This raises questions about how various socioeconomic conditions influence the emergence of sustainable fashion behavior. Students in regions such as Bengkulu, who are part of Generation Z but have unique socio-economic characteristics, are an interesting example. Students should be viewed as both potential consumers and agents of change for sustainable consumption practices, given their young age and significant influence on future consumption patterns.

This situation indicates a gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe consumers' knowledge, attitudes, willingness to pay more, and intention to purchase sustainable fashion products among students at Bengkulu University. This study also aims to determine the extent to which students' awareness of Generation Z is in line with their actual sustainable consumption habits. It is hoped that this study, which will use descriptive methodology, will provide an empirical picture of students' attitudes and behavior patterns related to sustainable fashion. This study will also serve as a basis for educational initiatives and policies that encourage the younger generation to consume more responsibly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which explains that intention is a major factor influencing an individual's actual behavior. The three main components of TPB are attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and behavioral control. In the context of sustainable fashion, TPB explains how consumer knowledge can have a positive impact on environmental products, which in turn increases the number of people who buy them.

According to research by Leclercq-Machado et al., (2022), positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion have a significant effect on purchase intention, while Lavuri et al., (2023) and Arora & Manchanda, (2022) show that consumer knowledge plays a crucial role in determining the attitudes in question. In addition, Henninger et al., (2016) and Davari & Strutton, (2014) emphasize that the availability of payment options makes it easier for consumers who have the ability to pay to stop sustainability. Therefore, TPB is a useful theory for explaining the relationship between knowledge,

attitudes, and purchase intentions in the context of sustainability, as well as for understanding the relationship between sustainability and actual actions (value–action gap) among Generation Z.

Consumer Knowledge

Understanding the various environmental factors that influence purchasing decisions regarding ecological sustainability, recognizing eco-friendly labels, and being aware of sustainability issues in sectors such as fashion and food are all considered aspects of consumer knowledge about environmental issues. Consumers with a high level of environmental knowledge are more likely to consider environmentally friendly factors when making decisions, according to Taufique et al., (2017). In the fashion sector, this includes awareness of production processes, the use of synthetic materials, and the impact of production on the environment. (Vehmas et al., 2018). However, Ritch, (2015)) states that many buyers are still unaware of the working conditions and environmental impact of fashion production. Although consumers often understand the value of sustainability, many do not have sufficient knowledge to distinguish between products that are truly sustainable and those that make false claims about it (a practice known as "greenwashing"). Kang et al., (2013) state that two main components of consumer knowledge, product expertise and information from previous experiences, influence purchasing decisions.

Previous studies have shown that consumer knowledge significantly influences consumers' intention to purchase sustainable fashion products. Positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion products can be enhanced through awareness of environmental issues and sustainable production processes, according to research by Lavuri et al., (2023) and Leclercq-Machado et al., (2022).). In addition, customers are more likely to purchase environmentally friendly products if they have a better understanding of how the fashion industry affects the environment (Arora & Manchanda, 2022).

Specifically, the main factors influencing the intention to purchase sustainable goods are environmental awareness and perceived environmental knowledge. The degree of consumer understanding of sustainable fashion also serves as a moderating factor between positive attitudes and purchase intentions towards these items, according to Lin & Chen, (2022) and Okur et al., (2023). Therefore, the higher the consumer's knowledge, the stronger the relationship between positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion and the intention to purchase it.

Students in Indonesia, especially at Bengkulu University, still have a low level of awareness of the concept of sustainable fashion. Many of them do not understand the impact of clothing production processes on the environment, such as textile waste and carbon emissions. Although environmental issues are increasingly being discussed, this awareness has not significantly influenced students' consumption behavior. The fast fashion trend and consumptive lifestyles still dominate, while education on the importance of choosing environmentally friendly products remains minimal. Therefore, universities need to play an active role in increasing understanding and encouraging students to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

Attitude

Attitude is a key concept used by marketers to understand their target audience. Kapoor & Madichie (2012) define attitude as a learned tendency to respond to a situation positively or negatively. In the context of marketing, attitude is generally understood as a long-term evaluation of a product or service. According to Argyriou & Melewar (2011), researchers must use specific measurements or tools to determine or investigate consumer attitudes, because attitudes cannot be observed directly. Consumer attitudes encompass various elements that influence purchasing decisions, including preferences for product characteristics, recommendations, and tastes. These attitudes explain how a person's opinions and background influence their choices. The process of integrating consumer knowledge shapes their attitudes toward an activity, which in turn influences a person's willingness to engage in certain behaviors. This idea of attitude is often used to predict consumer intentions and actions.

Many studies show how consumer perceptions of counterfeit goods are influenced by factors such as cost, brand awareness, risk, honesty, and personal satisfaction. The results of studies by Afroz et al., (2015) and Jaharuddin & Abd Wahab (2014), which explain that these factors have a significant relationship with the formation of consumer attitudes, support this. In addition, a number of behavioral studies have examined theoretical ideas about human attitudes, including a person's product preferences, purchase motivations, and interpersonal interactions. According to Chen (2007), intentions shape how behavior and attitudes toward an action are balanced. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) states that personal attitudes and beliefs influence purchase intentions, which are reliable indicators of purchasing behavior. However, purchasing behavior can only be carried out if there are opportunities and resources, such as the availability of sustainable goods. Jaharuddin & Abd Wahab (2014) argue that without these prerequisites, even strong purchase intentions become much more difficult to realize.

Although a positive attitude toward a product does not always translate into purchase intention, it is almost always a necessary prerequisite for customers to have a good intention to buy. This supports the findings of Belleau et al., (2007) and who found that positive views do not always translate into actual purchase intention. Furthermore, behavioral intention, which is a direct precursor to actual action, has a close relationship with attitude, according to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In a similar context, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Chang et al., (2020) shows that consumers' views of a brand influence their purchase intentions.

Willingness to Pay More

Given that customers care about sustainability but are unable to translate their intentions into sustainable purchasing practices, price is one of the main reasons for the gap between attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable fashion (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). According to research by), some buyers are willing to pay more for ethically produced fashion items, as long as they are convinced that the quality of the product, social benefits, or environmental benefits offered are equivalent. However,

they also highlight inconsistencies in behavior. According to Joergens (2006), some customers still prioritize price over other factors and are reluctant to pay more for items they consider too expensive. According to even though consumers express support for sustainability, their perception of high prices has prevented them from fully applying those feelings in practice.

Their research results show that the intention to buy sustainable fashion is greatly influenced by the willingness to pay more, which is not merely an expectation. Their structural model findings support this, showing that this element directly influences customer behavior and even ranks second in terms of influence after consumer awareness. The authors, however, acknowledge the limits of what customers consider to be fair added value. Although Wong, (2012) emphasize that a 10% increase is still acceptable, an additional increase of 25–30% is considered excessive. They cite Ciasullo et al. (2017), who state that some consumers are willing to pay up to 20% more. According to this study, industry players must consider psychological and economic thresholds even if consumers are willing to spend more money.

Students at Bengkulu University may be willing to pay more if the product is perceived to offer advantages such as better quality or a better reputation, and the higher cost is still within their reach. Individuals who are more environmentally conscious or exposed to the "green lifestyle" movement are often more accepting, but their choices are based on reality rather than idealism due to financial constraints. As a result, willingness to pay more is selective and only arises when it is consistent with the perceived benefits of the product, social influence, and financial ability.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is the readiness or determination of customers to buy a product at a certain time after obtaining relevant information. Purchase intention, according to Saxena (2011) is a reflection of consumer commitment that arises during the product evaluation process. This is in line with the findings of Spears dan Singh (2004), who state that the level of consumer awareness of a product and their tendency to choose that product while shopping are closely related to their desire to make a purchase. In addition, Lou dan Yuan (2019) emphasize that purchase intention can be used as an early indicator of actual consumption decisions because it describes the likelihood of consumers making a purchase. Regarding environmentally friendly goods, Santiago et al. (2020) explain that purchase intention is influenced by certain sustainability values in addition to product functionality.

In addition, purchase intention is considered a reliable indicator of actual behavior. According to Mirabi et al. (2015), purchase intention is often used to predict actual consumer behavior because it has a strong correlation with individual attitudes, perceptions, and behavior patterns. Dewanto dan Belgianwan (2020) support this by showing a positive and significant relationship between purchase intention and actual purchases of sustainable fashion items. Similar findings were also reported by Chang and Watchravesringkan (2018), who stated that the higher the purchase intention, the more likely consumers are to actually purchase the product. Bengkulu University students may have purchase intentions before they are willing to spend more money.

The main factors driving these intentions are awareness, education, and social influence, but price determines whether these intentions will be realized through actual purchases.

METHODOLOGY

- Sampling

The purpose of this study is to describe the level of consumer knowledge, attitudes, willingness to pay more, and purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion products among Generation Z, namely Bengkulu University students, using descriptive quantitative techniques. All active students from several faculties at Bengkulu University categorized as Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) were the target population of this study.

Because respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in completing an online questionnaire, the sampling method used was non-probability sampling with convenience sampling. A total of 34 respondents were successfully collected, which was considered sufficient for a quick survey or small- scale descriptive study. Individual students were the unit of analysis in this study, and their demographic details included name, age, gender, and faculty where they were enrolled.

- Data Collection

An online survey (Google Form) was used to collect primary data from Bengkulu University students in October 2025. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: demographic questions asking for the respondent's name, age, gender, and faculty, and main questions covering 14 statements related to four research constructs: purchase intention, attitude, consumer knowledge, and willingness to pay more. The mean, standard deviation, and level of respondents' perceptions for each research variable were among the descriptive analysis methods used to analyze the data collected using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

- Measurement

A five-point Likert scale (1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree) was used to measure each issue. Since the main objective of this survey was to obtain a general picture of young consumers' awareness and behavioral tendencies towards sustainability issues, the survey did not distinguish between respondents who had or did not have direct contact with sustainable fashion products. This research tool was modified from several previous studies relevant to the context of sustainable fashion.

Section	Items	References
	I'm very familiar with sustainable fashion products.	(Loureiro et al. 2018)

Costumer Knowledge	I often see sustainable fashion products in stores (both physical and online)	
	I buy sustainable clothing frequently.	
	I'm often a trial buyer of sustainable fashion products, even if I'm not a purchase buyer	
	I often learn more about sustainable fashion products by reading articles or news.	
Attitude	Generally, I have a favorable attitude towards the sustainable version of clothes	(Machado et al. 2022)
	I am positive-minded towards buying second-hand clothes	
	I like the idea of buying sustainable clothes instead of conventional clothes to contribute to environmental protection	
Willingness to pay more	I am willing to pay a higher price for a sustainable fashion product because it is sustainable for the environment	(Chaudhary and Bisai, 2018)
	I am willing to pay an extra percentage for sustainable fashion products to support the efforts of the company / product to be sustainable for the environment.	
	I am proud to have a sustainable fashion product, even if it is more expensive than a conventional fashion product.	
Purchase Intention	I intend or consider buying a sustainable fashion product when I see it.	(Loureiro et al. 2018)
	I intend to visit the store to buy a sustainable fashion product when I see it.	
	I am more likely to buy a fashion product if I know it is made with sustainable raw materials when I see one that meets my needs.	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

34 Generation Z students enrolled at Bengkulu University participated in this study. A systematic questionnaire measuring four key variables was used to collect data. To achieve the first research objective, which was to describe consumers' knowledge, attitudes, willingness to pay more, and purchase intentions of students

towards sustainable fashion, data analysis was performed using SPSS with descriptive analysis techniques.

		Statistics			
		X1	X2	X3	y
N	Valid	34	34	34	34
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		14.74	11.68	10.76	11.82
Std. Deviation		3.728	2.332	2.764	1.834
Variance		13.898	5.438	7.640	3.362
Range		16	7	10	7
Minimum		4	8	5	8
Maximum		20	15	15	15

Table 1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Statistical test results show that students have a high level of knowledge about sustainable fashion, with an average score of 14.74 out of a maximum score of 20, or 73.7%. Based on these findings, most respondents understand the concept of sustainable fashion, including how the fashion industry works, affect the environment and ethical production methods. However, there are significant differences in respondents' knowledge, as indicated by a standard deviation of 3.728 with a range of 16 points (minimum 4, maximum 20). This difference indicates that the level of sustainable fashion literacy among students still varies, with some having a deep understanding and others still having very limited knowledge. With an average score of 11.68 out of a total of 15 (77.9%), students showed a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion products. This score indicates that respondents view sustainable fashion products positively. Interestingly, the standard deviation of the attitude variable is relatively small at 2.332, indicating that respondents' opinions are generally consistent. No students showed rejection or a very negative attitude towards sustainable fashion, with a minimum score of 8 according to statistics, indicating that the importance of sustainability has been universally recognized.

The results for willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion products are more moderate compared to the other two factors. Among the three factors, this factor has the lowest average score, which is 10.76 out of a maximum score of 15 (71.7%). The significant variation in respondents' financial willingness is indicated by a standard deviation of 2.764 and a range of 10 (minimum 5, maximum 15). The pattern shows that although awareness and positive attitudes have developed, students' purchasing decisions are still heavily influenced by economic factors.

With an average score of 11.82 out of a total of 15 (78.8%), the intention to purchase sustainable fashion products, on the other hand, recorded the highest value. It is interesting to note that this variable also has the lowest standard deviation (1.834), indicating that respondents' intention to purchase is very consistent. There were no respondents with very low purchase intentions, as indicated by the minimum value of

8. According to this study, students tend to strongly and relatively consistently consider purchasing sustainable fashion items.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Bengkulu University students already have a good level of knowledge and attitude regarding sustainable fashion, reflecting Generation Z's initial awareness of the importance of sustainability in fashion product consumption. The willingness to pay more, which falls within the moderate range, indicates that actual economic activity does not yet fully reflect this awareness. The value-action gap, often observed in research on sustainable consumer behavior, is reflected in this pattern. The difference between a person's actual behavior and their values or beliefs is known as the value-action gap (Vlastelica et al., 2023). Students in this study showed awareness and positive views of sustainable fashion, as well as the intention to purchase it. However, obstacles began to emerge when they were asked to make actual financial decisions (e.g., whether they willing to pay more). According to international research, price sensitivity remains a significant barrier, even though Generation Z has a strong concern for sustainability (Tidswell, 2023).

According to Wiederhold dan Martinez (2018), one of the main causes of the mismatch between perceptions and actions related to sustainable fashion is cost. Consumers care about sustainability, but when sustainable goods are expensive, they do not always realize their goals. In the local Indonesian context, the findings of this study support this claim, especially for students who face greater financial barriers than working professionals. The study's findings show a clear cognitive route. Good purchase intentions (78.8%) are the result of positive attitudes (77.9%) shaped by good consumer knowledge (73.7%). This trend is in line with TPB, which states that attitudes toward the consequences of a behavior, such as knowledge of how fashion affects the environment, will influence attitudes, which in turn will influence intentions.

According to this study, the limitations students feel in controlling their behavior are reflected in their moderate willingness to pay more (71.7%), which varies most significantly. Although they have the intention, they lack the funds to realize it. This explains why, in the absence of sufficient economic support, high purchase intentions do not always lead to actual purchasing behavior. According to research by Davari dan Strutton (2014), some buyers are willing to spend more money on ethically produced fashion items, but only if they believe the items are worthwhile. This threshold is likely to be lower for students with limited funds.

According to Pires et al., (2024), despite increasing global awareness of sustainability issues, lifestyle factors and price reductions continue to have a greater influence on consumer behavior than sustainability principles. These results are consistent with a study of Bengkulu University students, who experienced greater financial constraints than a lack of awareness or concern. McNeill dan Moore (2015) found that although consumers expressed support for sustainability, their perception of high costs prevented them from fully implementing this mindset in practice. Price remains the primary factor for many buyers, according to Joergens (2006) and Chan

& Wong (2012) Price considerations become particularly important when students have limited extra money to spend.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe the level of consumer knowledge, attitude, willingness to pay more, and purchase intention of Bengkulu University students toward sustainable fashion products, as well as explore the extent to which the awareness of Generation Z reflects behavior consumption sustainable that Indeed. Based on a descriptive analysis of 34 respondents, this study found that students have a high level of knowledge about sustainable fashion, positive attitudes toward sustainable products, and strong purchase intentions. However, willingness to pay more is at a moderate level with the greatest variation among the four variables measured.

These findings answer the research question that even though students' awareness and intention towards sustainable fashion are already high, there is a gap (value-action gap) between awareness and the ability to actualize behavior. This gap is not caused by a lack of knowledge or positive attitudes, but rather by perceived limitations in behavioral control, particularly related to financial capabilities. This pattern confirms the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behavior in the local context, where perceived behavioral control is a crucial factor that can hinder the actualization of intentions into actual behavior. Bengkulu University students exhibit characteristics of "pragmatic environmentalism" they have comprehensive awareness and strong intentions toward sustainability, yet remain realistic about the economic limitations they face. This phenomenon is in line with global literature showing that Generation Z cares about the environment, but price sensitivity remains a major barrier in actualizing sustainability values into purchasing behavior.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the results. First, the limited sample size of 34 respondents from one university limits the generalization of the findings to a wider student population. Second, this study only uses a descriptive approach without statistically testing the causal relationship between variables, so that the interpretation of the knowledge-attitude-intention pathway is still exploratory. Third, the cross-sectional design does not allow researchers to capture the dynamics of changes in student behavior over time.

For future researchers, it is recommended to use inferential analysis methods such as multiple regression or Structural Equation Modeling to comprehensively test the causal relationships between variables in accordance with the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. Expanding the sample to various universities in Bengkulu and other regions is also necessary to obtain a more representative picture and enable comparative analysis. Longitudinal or experimental research can be conducted to observe whether purchase intentions is actually translated into actual behavior over time, as well as to identify the factors that facilitate or hinder the process. In-depth qualitative research through interviews or focus group discussions can also complement the understanding of the reasoning behind the willingness or unwillingness to pay more.

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