

Sustainable Fashion among Gen Z Consumers: A Study on Awareness

¹Ms Sreejani MV, ²Dr Saba Inamdar

¹Research Scholar, ²Assistant Professor & HOD In charge

¹²School of Commerce

¹²Presidency University Bengaluru, India

Abstract—The impact of sustainable fashion on the environment and ethics has created a broad global dialogue and a fast-growing industry segment. As new consumers with the most potential for impact, Gen Z audiences are environmentally and socially conscious. Responses reveal that numerous respondents are interested in environmentally and sustainably conscious products. Unfortunately, this interest has not translated into highly desirable shopping behavior. Many factors contribute to the low purchase interest gap, from confusion about green claims to a lack of knowledge about the sustainable options available. The purpose of the study is to assess the degree to which Gen Z respondents are familiar with sustainable fashion. The study aims to assess their awareness of sustainable options, the extent of their eco-conscious shopping values, and the reasons that primarily influence their shopping decisions. The outcome of the study shows that the most common element among Gen Z respondents remains the knowledge and understanding of the more essential/simplistic concepts, such as “ethical sourcing” and “free trade” vs. deeper knowledge of sustainable materials, certification, and brands. It reveals that while many respondents are interested in sustainable shopping, many prioritize cost and brand name to guide shopping decisions. The study aims to encourage transparent messaging to mend the gap of disengagement in sustainable shopping within the Gen Z cohort.

Index Terms—Consumer Awareness, Eco-Friendly Products, Environmental Consciousness, Gen Z Consumers, Sustainable Fashion

I. Introduction

The fashion business is widely acknowledged as one of the world's most resource-intensive and ecologically harmful industries while being a vital component of economic activity and cultural expression (Olivar Aponte et al., 2024). Carbon emissions, water pollution, textile waste, and exploitative labour practices are just a few of the detrimental environmental effects that have escalated due to fast fashion's acceleration of production cycles and promotion of overconsumption (Shamsuzzaman et al., 2025). Given this, sustainable fashion has become a crucial paradigm shift that promotes circular production processes, ethical labour practices, less consumption, and eco-friendly materials (D'Itria & Aus, 2023). Consumer behaviour is drastically changing as sustainability becomes a top priority for many businesses (Schiarioli et al., 2024). People born roughly between 1997 and 2012 are known as Generation Z (Gen Z), and they are notable among the new consumer categories for their progressive beliefs, technical prowess, and outspoken support of social and environmental problems (Krishna & Agrawal, 2024). Gen Z is a significant consumer cohort influencing market trends because of their affinity for genuine, value-driven companies and their impact on digital platforms (Faludi, 2025). Despite these developments, there is still a dearth of empirical

information about Gen Z's comprehension of sustainable fashion and its affects on their shopping decisions. Although many young consumers voice concerns about ethical and environmental issues, it is crucial to ascertain if these concerns convert into well-informed, thoughtful fashion-buying decisions. Values and practices may diverge due to the difficulty of sustainability and the appeal of fast fashion's accessibility and cost.

This study concentrates on four main goals. First, it seeks to investigate the awareness of sustainable fashion amongst Gen Z and the level of their knowledge surrounding the sustainability issues of the fashion industry. It will also look into their knowledge of sustainable fashion practices such as upcycling and/or recycling resources, ethically sourced materials, slow fashion, and second-hand or thrift-store shopping. Third, this survey will analyze Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable (and/or "green") fashion by exploring their thoughts, prurient feelings, and the propensity to "shop sustainable." Lastly, this study will look into the effects of social influence, social media, cost (affordability) and brand honesty. The comprehensive nature of this study will allow for deeper understanding of Gen Z and sustainable fashion. The research will benefit the sustainability-focused fashion industry, the stakeholders, and the customers, as well as transnational sustainable customer behavior and eco-friendly consumerism and the clientele.

II. Literature

A rise in scholarly interest in sustainable fashion consumption has been alarmed by the growing significance of ethical and environmental issues in the global fashion industry. Generation Z the cohort of digital natives born roughly between 1997 and 2012 are at the centre of this change. The globally connected and growing socioeconomic influence are characteristics of this generation (Niinimäki, 2010; Park, 2013). They differ from earlier generations in that they have ingrained values about sustainability and distinct consumption patterns (Moore, 2015) . Gen Z consumers are more likely than previous generations to look for brands that communicate openly support moral behaviour and represent who they are. Their desire for sustainability self-expression and online visibility frequently influences their fashion choices (Wang et al., 2020). Gen Z actively participates in forming fashion narratives assesses brand values and experiments with new styles through social media and mobile-based shopping (Chang et al., 2018). Specifically, the Chinese Gen Z market has become a significant consumer force. Compared to their Western counterparts they have a far greater impact on household spending (Zhao et al., 2022). The fact that most of these customers like to shop online and are drawn to high-end long-lasting fashion items suggests that consumers are becoming more aware of sustainability and durability (Chan & Lau, 2000). Innovation in fashion is essential to comprehending Gen Zs fashion habits. Some customers known as fashion innovators embrace new trends early on and utilize apparel as a means of individuality and self-identification. These people are seen as opinion leaders in their peer groups and are more aware of fashion trends (Workman & Kidd, 2000). However, those who follow fashion have a tendency to adopt styles only after they have gained wider

acceptance indicating varying degrees of trend adoption and risk-taking (Beard, 2008). For brands looking to increase their sustainable appeal it is crucial to cater to the preferences of both innovators and followers (Olivar Aponte et al., 2024). The degree of fashion involvement is closely related to innovativeness and reflects the significance that people attach to fashion. High-involved buyers frequently devote time and energy to choosing fashion items and view apparel as a way to express oneself and connect with others. (O'Cass, 2004) This engagement is especially high among women and younger consumers suggesting that fashion continues to be a major aspect of these groups identities and lifestyles (Fiore & Kimle, 1997). If the products fit the consumers aesthetic preferences and values increased involvement frequently translates into a willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. According to (Chan & Lau, 2000) consumers who are highly concerned about the environment are more likely to support sustainable brands practice green consumption and react favourably to ethical advertising. These customers are frequently critical of the environmental impact of fast fashion and may place a higher value on materials like organic cotton recycled polyester or upcycled textiles (Hill & Lee, 2012). Messages about sustainability and climate change are frequently more receptive to younger generations such as Gen Z which forces brands to adjust (Maniatis, 2016). Consumers are motivated by this need to adopt unique styles and wear distinctive apparel even if doing so deviates from social norms (Mohd Suki, 2016). In addition to being an aesthetic choice fashion is also a means of social recognition identity construction and standing out for many Gen Z consumers (Asch, 1946). There is still a large knowledge gap regarding sustainable fashion practices despite the growing interest in sustainability. Although many Gen Z customers care about the environment they are not particularly aware of how the fashion industry affects it (Armstrong et al., 2015). This confusion is made worse by brands evasive sustainability claims and green washing. Fashion designers and environmentally conscious consumers can be empowered to advocate for ethical practices and make well-informed decisions by receiving focused education (Jin Gam, 2011). Strategies like clothing recycling trading and renting have become popular substitutes for fast fashion particularly among young consumers looking for socially and ecologically conscious options (Niinimäki, 2010). Further evidence of this groups move toward conscious consumption comes from the slow fashion movement and support for regional brands (Moore, 2015). Gen Zs involvement with sustainable fashion is influenced by digital technology in two ways. On the one hand its use of influencer marketing algorithms and quick delivery systems encourages excessive consumption (Brais et al., 2004). Conversely it facilitates increased availability of data peer reviews and sustainability indicators. Technology has shown multiple ways to promote ethical design including blockchain traceability systems and apps that grade apparel companies on sustainability (Joy et al., 2012). Thrifted clothes and resale apps are some examples of these systems. Gen Z's sociocultural background directly impacts their clothing purchases (Wang et al., 2020). Stereotypical ideas of what social and religious communities or families from a specific region determine what ethical clothing means to them. In the West, sustainability is often seen through the lenses of environmental and personal ethics (Leonidou et al., 2010). These ideas are

further impacted by social norms and peer pressure. Gen Z often seeks their networks for social and style inspiration. Once valued networks adopt sustainability, the practice will spread rapidly. Sustainable design social media challenges, pop-up events, and other grassroots innovations led by Gen Z normalize sustainability. Many criticize ethical clothing brands for having prohibitively high price points. The balance of funding and supporting ethical design through government grants and tax breaks to sustainable businesses and social design for corporate efficiency will close the price gap (Hill & Lee, 2012). The industry can leverage Gen Zs potential to propel a more moral and ecologically conscious future by involving them in meaningful narratives open and honest business practices and inclusive pricing.

III. Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of awareness about sustainable fashion among Gen Z consumers.
2. To examine Gen Z consumers' understanding of sustainable fashion practices.
3. To identify the attitudes of Gen Z consumers toward eco-friendly fashion.
4. To explore the factors influencing Gen Z consumers' fashion choices.

IV. Methodology

This study intended to analyze sustainable fashion awareness of Generation Z consumers in Bengaluru. For this quantitative and descriptive type of study, an online, structured survey was used predominantly for data collection. The survey examined the participants' demographics and their awareness, attitudes, and behavior as they relate to sustainable fashion. Convenience sampling was used to gather data from Gen Z respondents, who were ages 13 to 28, via digital platforms (Armutcu & Tan, 2023). There were 200 answers in all among them 95 are female and 105 are male. In order to find important patterns and associations, the data were analyzed using IBM SPSS. Anonymity, voluntary involvement, and informed consent were all rigorously upheld as ethical principles.

V. Analysis

Table no. 1

The awareness of sustainable fashion

Rating	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very Poor	03	1.5
Poor	15	7.5
Average	98	49
Good	71	35.5
Excellent	13	6.5
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The level of awareness of sustainable fashion among Gen Z customers is shown in the following table. 49% of the 200 respondents have an average degree of awareness, meaning that the majority of them are knowledgeable. Only 1.5% of respondents had extremely poor awareness, showing a lack of knowledge of sustainable fashion, compared to 35.5% who have good awareness, 7.5% who have bad awareness, and 6.5% who have excellent awareness.

Table no. 2

The understanding of sustainable practices (multiple responses allowed)

Attributes	No. of responses	Percentage
Materials	138	68.7
Fair wages	90	44.8
Energy	77	38.3
Vegan products	60	29.9
Pricing	34	16.9
No opinion	33	16.4

Source: Primary data

The comprehension of sustainable practices is shown in the above table, and responders are permitted to provide more than one response. The materials utilized as a form of sustainable practices are well understood by 68.7% of respondents. According to 44.8% of the respondents, fair pay are due to understanding. 38.3% of those surveyed concur that energy is a feature of comprehension. Vegan items are accepted as a feature of understanding by 29.9% of the respondents. Just 16.4% of respondents have no opinion regarding their grasp of sustainable practices, whereas 16.9% of respondents view pricing as an aspect of understanding.

Table no. 3

The consumer attitude for buying from sustainable brands

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Always	44	22
Often	46	23
Sometimes	83	41.5
Rarely	19	9.5
Never	08	4
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The opinions and preferences of consumers toward purchasing from brands that support sustainability are depicted in the above table. Of the 200 respondents, 41.5% said they occasionally choose to shop from sustainable businesses, 23% said they frequently do so, 22% said they usually do so, 9.5% said they do so infrequently, and only 4% said they never do so.

Table no.4

Frequency of Checking Brand Eco-Friendliness before Purchase

Frequency	No of respondents	Percentage
Always	24	12
Often	36	18
Sometimes	85	42.5
Rarely	39	19.5
Never	16	8
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The behavior of customers about how frequently they examine if a fashion brand is environmentally friendly before making a purchase is depicted in the above table. Of 200 respondents, 42.5% check occasionally, 19.5% seldom, 18% frequently, 12% always, and just 8% never check if a brand is environmentally friendly.

Table no. 5

Influence on fashion choices (multiple responses allowed)

Factors	No. of responses	Percentage
High price	107	53
Limited options	113	55.9
Lack of awareness	88	43.6
Unclear brand claims	64	31.7
Not interested	30	14.9

Source: Primary data

The various issues that prevent consumers from purchasing sustainable fashion are shown in the above table. Just 14.9% of the respondents indicate that they are not interested, whereas 55.9% have restricted options, 53% have high price difficulties, 43.6% are unaware, and 31.7% have confusing brand promises.

VI. Discussions

The report indicates that Bangalore's Gen Z customer base is conscious of sustainable fashion, but their knowledge is mostly superficial. While most relate to concepts such as living wages and sustainable resources, most are unaware of explanations such as accreditations and the transparency of brands. This gap in awareness and understanding speaks to the need for a greater emphasis on edifying sustainable practices.

Responses to the survey indicate that the participants want a sustainable fashion industry and wish to buy from brands that support this cause. Though the willingness to buy from sustainable brands is present, the ability does not follow due to costs, limited options, and lack of sustainable practices. When buying clothes, Gen Z's shopping behavior and peer influence are much stronger than the desire to buy sustainably.

The results of this survey relate to previous literature in that Gen Z has a love for sustainability, and the ability to buy sustainably is an issue. Policy and business solutions should target the cost and availability of fashion while implementing more sustainable practices. It is crucial that sustainability is message-focused in order to provide Gen Z with the ability to buy sustainably and therefore make a huge difference in the industry.

VII. Conclusion

The aim of this research is to reach a thorough understanding of the awareness and attitudes toward sustainable fashion of Generation Z in Bangalore. We find that most of the participants have, at most, a moderate understanding of sustainable fashion, which extends beyond the principles of sustainability, such as the use of green materials and the provision of fair labor. This research reveals a positive attitude toward sustainable fashion, but this awareness has not, to a large extent, influenced day-to-day economic behaviors. Sustainable fashion has a number of barriers including high costs, low supply, ambiguous claims, and a lack of awareness, which influence participant preferences. Even though a large number of Generation Z participants are inclined to support environmentally sustainable brands, the barriers to sustainable consumption remain. Social media, friends, and fast fashion have an impact on clothing choices, which exceeds concerns about sustainable fashion. In order to merge the gap from intention to action, consumer education, sustainable options that are affordable and accessible, and improved transparency of marketing claims should be prioritized. The joint duty of the brands, educators, and policymakers remains to empower this generation, which is digitally advanced and socially conscious, to make sustainable fashion choices. In a world led by Generation Z, preparing them to make sustainable fashion choices has the potential to influence the future of fashion.

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