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AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TO SUSTAINABLE AND SLOW FASHION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN CHENNAI

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***Abstract*:** The fast fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to environmental pollution, driven by frequent purchase of inexpensive garments and their rapid disposal. Fashion industry also involves unfair labor practices where workers are underpaid and exposing to poor working conditions. In contrast, Sustainable and Slow fashion is antithesis of fast fashion. It promotes the purchase of high – quality and timeless garments protecting environment and workers. This study aims to examine the awareness, attitude and purchase intention of young adults aged 18 – 25 years towards sustainable and slow fashion. Data were collected through structured questionnaire from 80 participants. The study employed Kruskal Wallis, correlation and multiple linear regression analyses. The tests revealed a high positive correlation among awareness, attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention. Furthermore, young adults demonstrated high purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion products when they viewed them as high quality, stylish and durable.

***Keywords*:** *Slow Fashion, Awareness, Attitudes, Perceived Product Attributes, Purchase Intention, Sustainability*

I. INTRODUCTION

The global fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to environmental degradation producing nearly 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually and contributes to 10 percent of global CO2 emissions (Ellen McArthur Foundation,2021). The fast fashion model has reduced the average lifespan of clothes by 36 percent in the last 15 years which has increased the textiles waste and unfair labour practices (McKinsey,2022). The fast fashion industry is the second largest consumer of water requiring approximately 3,800 litres of water to produce a single pair of jeans. Globally, garment industry consumes 200 trillion litres of water annually (World Bank,2019).

Sustainable fashion has no universally agreed upon definition. It is a multifaceted concept and is dependent on context and perspectives of organizations, experts and consumers but it involves minimizing the negative impacts on planet (reducing waste, resource consumption and using eco-friendly materials) and people (fair working conditions and wages) (Henninger et al. 2016). Slow Fashion is a transformative response to unsustainable practices of fast fashion industry. Slow fashion not only addresses the pace of fast fashion industry and it is a holistic approach aimed at economic systems, business model and values that drives fast fashion industry. Fast fashion industry is a tool for the growth of the economy compromising on the ecological and social aspects whereas slow fashion supports long term wellbeing of the planet and people. Slow fashion is within the broader concept of “slow culture” which focusses on quality, longevity and mindful engagement over revenue and disposability (Kate Fletcher,2010).

The fashion industry is expanding in India especially among young consumers who are influenced by fast-changing trends and social media. But the awareness about environmental, social and ethical consequences are limited. Recent study revealed that consumers recognise the importance of sustainability

in fashion industry but their purchase behaviour is constrained by lack of information, high cost of sustainable products and limited availability (Connell & Kozar, 2014). As sustainability is becoming global importance understanding how young consumers perceive and respond to sustainable and slow fashion is essential.

Several studies have examined awareness and attitudes towards sustainable and slow fashion in western economies (Fletcher, 2010) and the empirical study in Indian context is limited. There is a gap in research with regard to how young consumers in metropolitan city like Chennai engage in sustainable and slow fashion. Hence, this study examines the awareness, attitude and purchase intention of young adults aged between 18-25. This study provides insights for tailoring marketing strategies and awareness campaigns. It is also important for developing responsible consumer practices in India.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the influence of shopping frequency on attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion.
2. To examine the relationship among awareness, attitudes, perceived product attributes and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion.
3. To analyse the combined influence of awareness, attitudes and perceived product attributes on purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Awareness refers to understanding and familiarity with the problems associated with the ecological, social and ethical consequences of clothing choices. It is the extent to which consumers are informed about sustainability issues and their ability to link their personal responsibility in consumption. Research reveals that high awareness leads to high purchase intention for instance Niinimaki (2015) observed that well-informed consumers adopt slow and ethical consumption whereas Connell & Kozar, (2014) reported that despite increased awareness towards slow fashion, it is not reflected in the actual purchasing behaviour signifying the attitude-behaviour gap.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) attitude refers to favourable or unfavourable evaluation of engaging in a behaviour. Seock (2024), reported that attitude mediates the relationship between environmental awareness and purchase intention. Similarly, Hoang & Tung, (2024) observed consumers with positive attitudes towards sustainability and ethical labour practices exhibit stronger purchase intentions.

Perceived Product Attributes refer to the evaluation of the characteristics of the product that influence the purchasing decision. Research has established that consumers view sustainable apparel as superior product quality and aesthetic appeal also Lundblad & Davies, (2016) found that product attributes such as timeless design, comfort and durability increase the willingness to buy sustainable clothing.

Purchase intention refers to the planning and willingness to buy a specific product. According to Theory of the Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), purchase intention is influenced by individual's attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control over the action. Similarly, Singh and Somani (2024) found that consumers with pro- environmental attitudes and positive perception about recycled clothing materials show intention towards sustainable garments. Likewise, Bhawana and Anupama (2025) reported in systematic review that awareness and attitudes positively predict purchase intention among young Indian adults.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine awareness, attitudes, perceived product attributes and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion. Data were collected using structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions on five-point Likert scale, with each construct consisting of 4 to 6 items, distributed via Google Forms. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from 80 respondents in Chennai aged 18-25years. The data were analysed using SPSS software, employing inferential statistics such as the Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney test, Pearson's Correlation and multiple linear regression.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Difference in Purchase Intention among respondents with different Shopping Frequencies

H0: There is no significant difference in purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

H1: There is a significant difference in purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

Table 1: Kruskal Wallis test

Test Statistic	Value
Kruskal–Wallis H	7.835
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2
Asymptotic Significance (p-value)	0.02

Table 1 presents the results of Kruskal-Wallis test, which indicated a statistically significant difference in purchase intention among respondents with different shopping frequencies *(H = 7.835, p = 0.02).* Hence, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2: Post hoc Mann-Whitney U test for pairwise group comparison

Test Statistics	Intention score
Mann-Whitney U	73.5
Wilcoxon W	139.5
Z	-2.805
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.004

Table 2 illustrates the results of post hoc Mann-Whitney U test, conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, which showed a statistically significant difference in purchase intention between respondents who shop every 4-6 months and those who shop above 6 months towards sustainable and slow fashion *(U=73.5, p=.004).* Therefore, respondents who shop every 4-6 months show higher purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion compared to those who shop above 6 months.

Difference in Attitude among respondents with different Shopping Frequencies

H0: There is no significant difference in attitude towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

H2: There is a significant difference in attitude towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

Table 3: Kruskal Wallis test

Test Statistic	Value
Kruskal–Wallis H	9.077
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2
Asymptotic Significance (p-value)	0.011

Table 3 presents the results of Kruskal-Wallis test, which showed a statistically significant difference in the attitude towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies *(H=9.077, p=.011)* Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4: Post hoc Mann Whitney U test for pairwise group comparison

Test Statistics	Attitude score
Mann-Whitney U	62
Wilcoxon W	128
Z	-3.139
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.001

Table 4 illustrates the results of post hoc Mann-Whitney U test, conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, which revealed a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards sustainable and slow fashion between respondents who shop every 4-6 months and those who shop above 6 months *(U=62, p=.001).* Therefore, respondents who shop every 4-6 months show positive attitudes towards sustainable and slow fashion compared to those who shop above 6 months.

Difference in Perceived Product Attributes among respondents with different shopping frequency

H0: There is no significant difference in perceived product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

H3: There is a significant difference in perceived product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion among respondents with different shopping frequencies

Table 5: Kruskal Wallis test

Test Statistics	Value
Kruskal-Wallis H	7.217
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.027

Table 5 presents the results of Kruskal-Wallis test, which indicated a statistically significant difference in the perceived product attributes among respondents with different shopping frequencies *(H = 7.217, p = 0.027).* Hence, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 6: Post hoc Mann Whitney U test for pairwise group comparison

Test Statistics	Attributes scores
Mann-Whitney U	67.000
Wilcoxon W	133.000
Z	-2.988
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.002

Table 6 presents the results of post hoc Mann-Whitney U test, conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, which showed a statistically significant difference in perceived product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion between respondents who shop every 4-6 months and those who shop above 6 months *(U=67.00, p=.002).* Therefore, respondents who shop every 4-6 months show positive perceptions of product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion compared to those who shop above 6 months.

Relationship among Awareness, Attitude, Perceived Product Attributes and Purchase Intention

For correlation analysis, null hypotheses assume no significant relationship among the variables and research hypotheses assumes significant relationship among the variables.

H4: There is a significant relationship between awareness and attitude towards sustainable and slow fashion

H5: There is a significant relationship between awareness and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion

H6: There is a significant relationship between awareness and perceived product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion

H7: There is a significant relationship between attitude and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion

H8: There is a significant relationship between attitude and perceived product attributes towards sustainable and slow fashion

H9: There is a significant relationship between perceived product attributes and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion

Table 7: Correlation test

Correlation		Awareness Score	Attitude score	Intention score	Attributes scores
Awareness Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.826**	.763**	.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	80	80	80	80
Attitude score	Pearson Correlation	.826**	1	.832**	.906**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	80	80	80	80
Intention score	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.832**	1	.855**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	80	80	80	80
Attributes scores	Pearson Correlation	.765**	.906**	.855**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	80	80	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 illustrates the results of the Pearson's correlation test, which indicated a strong, positive and statistically significant correlations at 0.001 level of significance (two - tailed) among all the variables. Specifically, awareness showed strong positive correlation with attitude *(r=.826, p < .001)*, perceived product attributes *(r=.765, p < .001)* and purchase intention *(r=.763, p < .001).* Similarly, attitude was positively and strongly correlated with perceived product attributes *(r=.906, p < 0.001)* and purchase intention *(r=.832, p < .001).* Moreover, perceived product attributes were positively and strongly correlated with purchase intention *(r=.855, p < .001).* Hence, all the null hypotheses were rejected.

Multiple Regression model for predicting Purchase Intention

H0: Awareness, attitude and perceived product attributes do not significantly predict purchase intention of sustainable and slow fashion

H10: Awareness, attitude and perceived product attributes significantly predict purchase intention of sustainable and slow fashion

Table 8: Model Summary for Regression Predicting Purchase Intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.873[a]	0.763	0.753

The model summary table indicates that all the independent variables explained 76.3% of the variance in the purchase intention *(R^2 = .763, Adjusted R^2 = .753)*, indicating strong predictive relationship between predictors and purchase intention.

Table 9: ANOVA for Regression model predicting Purchase Intention

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.05	3	19.683	81.425	.000[b]
	Residual	18.372	76	0.242		
	Total	77.422	79			

The ANOVA table indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant *(F (3,76) = 81.425, p < .001)*, suggesting that awareness, attitude and perceived product attributes together have a significant influence on purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion.

Table 10: Coefficients of Predictors of Purchase Intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.379	.196		1.929	.058
	Awareness Score	.192	.091	.210	2.115	.038
	Attitude score	.151	.139	.164	1.086	.281
	Attributes scores	.510	.124	.545	4.117	.000

Table 10 indicates that among the predictors, perceived product attributes emerged as the strongest significant predictor of purchase intention *(β = .545, t = 4.117, p < .001),* followed by awareness *(β = .210, t = 2.115, p = .038).* However, attitude did not significantly predict purchase intention *(β = .164, t = 1.086, p = .281).* Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study examines the awareness, attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention of young adults aged 18 – 25 years in Chennai towards sustainable and slow fashion. The results revealed a strong positive correlation among all the major constructs, indicating that increasing awareness about environmental issues, sustainability and slow fashion is associated with positive attitude, positive perceptions about the attributes and higher purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion. This finding aligns with the finding of Niinimaki (2015), who reported that greater awareness leads to increased ethical and sustainable purchasing behavior. Multiple linear regression indicated that perceived product

attributes and awareness predict the purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion. The result aligns with study by Cascavilla et al. (2025), who observed that awareness and improved product attributes such as material, durability and visual appeal increase purchase intention. Similarly, Bhawna and Anupama (2025) indicated that awareness of sustainability issues and perception about product as quality, durable and stylish strengthen the purchase intention. However, attitude did not predict purchase intention which contrasts the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and prior study by (Hoang & Tung, 2024) that identified attitude as a key determinant of behavioral intention. However, similar inconsistencies found in sustainability literature, reflecting attitude – behavior gap (Joy et al., 2012; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Hence, awareness and perceived product attributes exert positive influence on purchase intention, suggesting that consumer's purchase intentions are guided by cognitive and product evaluations rather than affective attitudes. The Kruskal Wallis test revealed the differences among shopping frequency groups in attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention. This aligns with Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) which states that repeated exposure increases the familiarity and product evaluation. Similarly, these results are supported by Colasante et al. (2023) who reported that frequent shoppers exhibit greater involvement and stronger willingness towards sustainable fashion. Consistent with Consumer Involvement Theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985), frequent shoppers have high product involvement, leading to positive product perception of style and quality, consequently higher purchase intention.

VII. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study examined the awareness, attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention of young adults towards sustainable and slow fashion in Chennai city. Results revealed that awareness and perceived product attributes significantly predicts purchase intention, while attitude did not. This signifies that young adult's purchase intentions are guided by cognitive and product-based evaluations rather than affective attitudes. It also indicated that increasing awareness create positive attitude, positive perception and purchase intention towards sustainable and slow fashion. Further, shopping frequency influenced the attitude, perceived product attributes and purchase intention, reflecting the role of repeated exposure and consumer involvement in sustainable consumption.

This study contributes to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) by highlighting that awareness and product evaluations may outweigh attitude in predicting intention and also supports Consumer Involvement Theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985) by showing frequent shoppers demonstrate stronger product involvement. Practically, the results suggest that marketers should focus on style, quality, durability when creating awareness and should focus on accessibility of sustainable and slow fashion among young adults.

This study is limited by small sample size (N = 80) and focus on Chennai which restricts generalization. Future research could include subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and price factor to provide deeper insights into sustainable and slow fashion consumption.

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