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Why Generation Z Still Buy Fast Fashion Although Environmental Awareness is High?

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Although they are known as the generation that is aware of the negative impact of fast fashion to environment, Generation Z is also known as the avid consumer of fast fashion. This study found that although as expected the higher the environmental awareness, the more negative attitude toward continuing to purchase fast fashion among Gen Z, however the relationship is not significant. In other words, the existence of environmental awareness is nothing to do with the attitude toward continuing to purchase Fast Fashion. Generation Z keep buying fast fashion because their attitude is positively influenced by the availability of sustainable fashion, trend of fashion and negatively by the function of the fashion itself. The study is held in Jakarta Metropolitan. Using questionnaire distributed to Gen Z and data analysis use PLS SEM version 4, the study aims to understand the behaviour that can help reduce the fast fashion waste among Gen Z.

Keywords: Fast fashion, environmental awareness, attitudes towards continuing to buy fast fashion, availability of sustainable fashion, fashion trends, function of fashion.

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Introduction

Fashion Industry has been acknowledged as the second largest producer of carbon emission, along with the negative social and environmental impacts that include unfair working conditions and produce high carbon emission (Gomes de Oliveira *et al.*, 2022; Bick *et al.*, 2018). Fast fashion, that contributes the most enormous carbon footprint, can be produced and distributed to the stores within two weeks and have new items launched every day. In Indonesia, clothing industry also has caused both serious environmental and water pollution. Textile production has contributed to 29.25% water pollution in Indonesia alone (Paraschiv *et al.*, 2015)

The fast fashion model offers consumers new products at low prices and trendy styles that create sharp increase in textile production and fashion consumption (Bick *et al.*, 2018). The current business structure of the fashion industry is based on increasing production and sales, rapid manufacturing, inferior product quality, and short product life cycles, all of which lead to unsustainable consumption, rapid material throughput, significant waste and significant environmental impacts

(Niinimäki *et al.*, 2020). Many studies indicate that ecofriendly and sustainable fashion as a solution to environmental problems has recently gained popularity. When consumers believe that they can help solve environmental problems, they are more inclined to make green purchasing decisions (Park & Lin, 2020).

One of the generation influenced by fast fashion is Generation Z, young adults who were born after 1996 (Parker & Igielnik, 2020), with age between 18 – 25 years old (Simpson, 2018). In Indonesia, this generation comprise of 27,94% of the population and the largest population compared with another cohort. Gen Z also pay more attention to social, cultural and environmental issues (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010) and requires business to produce ethical products or services that contribute to the well-being of society in general (Goldman Sachs, 2016). On the other hand, data also shows that this generation is the most consumption-oriented generation especially in fast fashion items and is known for its high purchasing power, hedonism as well as fashion awareness (Williams & Hodges, 2021).

As environmental awareness grows, so does interest in designing and producing eco - friendly

clothing (Delieva & Eom, 2019). Most of the studies discuss about the relationship between environmental awareness and green purchase (Abeysekera *et al.*, 2022; Song *et al.*, 2020); the mediation effect of environmental awareness on eco-labelling to purchases, and the effect of product attribute, eco-labelling on green purchase (Song *et al.*, 2020) and positive relationship between environmental awareness to pro-environmental behaviour (Al-kumaim *et al.*, 2021).

However, consumers ' attitudes when making purchasing decisions are irrational and not always in line with their values (Vehmas et al., 2018). Zhang et al., (2021) found that sustainability alone is not enough to bring about the necessary adjustments in consumers' clothing purchases because of three reasons: first, sustainable fashion is too demanding, customers' ethical concerns are too diverse, and clothing is not an altruistic purchase. Vehmas et al., (2018) found that sustainable fashion is not a priority for young customers, and they continue to buy fast fashion despite strongly supporting the concept. Many customers care more about their own fashion needs than the requirements of others in the apparel supply chain. The limited availability of clothing items elicits a loss aversion reaction in consumers and stimulates buying (Harris et al., 2016). Begum Ersoy & Fu (2021) found that fast fashion has also changed the relationship between quality and quantity. Musova et al., (2021) found that barriers were uncovered at the individual, social and cultural levels, as well as within the clothing industry.

This study aimed to investigate how strong environmental awareness influence is on the attitude toward continuing purchase fast fashion when other factors exist at the same time. More specifically, this study focus was to examine the relation between environmental awareness, the availability of sustainable fashion, fashion trends, and function toward the attitude to continue purchasing fast fashion. Is their high environmental awareness can slow them down buying or repurchase fast fashion? What are the factors that influence Gen Z attitude toward continuously buying fast fashion?

In general terms, awareness refers to the quality or state of being aware, in this case, environmental awareness is an essential factor in promoting sustainable behaviour or practices that emphasize awareness of the environmental problems as well as solutions to these problems (Paradewari *et al.*, 2018). However, due to its interpretations strongly relying on an individual's ideology, a consensus regarding its precise definition has not yet been reached. Al-kumaim *et al.*, (2021) indicates that environmental awareness is a multidimensional construct, which consists of environmental concern, environmental knowledge, and environmental attitude. Al-kumaim *et al.*, (2021) found that individuals with a high level of environmental awareness are more likely to behave in an environmentally friendly manner. Many

studies have concerns about the correlation between environmental awareness and green purchase. Although other research such as Song et al., (2020) and Xu et al., (2020) have revealed that environmental awareness has proven to have a significant influence on attitude, limited research has been addressed in the context of fast fashion. Most of these studies concentrated only from the green or sustainable products context. For example, Xu et al., (2020) had discussed the effect of environmental awareness to forecast the attitude of customers toward green furniture, and they also showed that environmental awareness is able to increase customers' intention to purchase green products. Lin & Niu (2018) also noted that customers with high environmental awareness and knowledge have more intention to purchase green products than customers with low environmental awareness. The relation of environmental awareness toward the attitude of buying fast fashion remains ambiguous. This leads to uncertainty whether environmental awareness influences customers' attitude toward purchasing fast fashion and suggests the need for further study. Given the discussion above, the hypothesis

H1: Environmental awareness has a negative significant relationship to the attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion.

The effectiveness of sustainability action has become an important consideration for many companies (Chang & Jai, 2015). In the fashion industry, sustainability is utilized in a variety of ways. It refers to a company's social, environmental, and financial characteristics (Kong et al., 2016). Khare et al., (2020) found that a few factors influenced people's decisions to purchase fashion, one such factor is the availability of sustainable fashion products. The term "availability" describes how easy a buyer believes they may purchase or consume a certain sustainable fashion product (Khare et al., 2020). In the current study, the availability of sustainable fashion products refers to the degree when consumer believes that he or she may acquire the desired product in general. Availability can be a crucial thing to meet customer demand and ensure that popular items remain in stock (Harris et al., 2016). Thus, it can be argued that the limited availability of sustainable fashion products might be a barrier that will influence consumers continuing buying sustainable fashion products (Bósquez et al., 2023). Based on the literature review above, the following hypothesis was proposed

H2: The availability of sustainable fashion has a negative significant relationship to attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion.

The term "fashion trend" refers to the aspects of the appearance and construction of fashion products that are associated with a particular period. In the realm of fashion, trend making fashion as a lifestyle unit, which is driven by the ease exchanging reference and information from outside making the exchange of fashion trends change globally. Fashion trends can be influenced by several forming factors such as mass media, culture, economic conditions and the role of an individual in a social group (Kim et al., 2022). New paradigms of trend emergence have been developed because of consumer driven fashion trends and continuous social media monitoring, which can help brands in identifying their core value. With the existence of fashion trends, companies can create separate market segments which in turn result in consumer purchasing decisions (Cruz and Manata, 2020). Trend is a way for individuals to show their existence, which makes them compete to follow the current trend and become a trend seller. Previous research by Arsita (2022) indicated that young customers have a higher propensity to adopt new style fashion than other mature customers. Breward (1994) posited that the tendency of an individual who wants to follow fashion trends, will influence the purchase decision process or attitude toward buying fashion products. Based on those theories, it can be concluded that a fashion trend occurring in a group can encourage someone to act or direct to a new lifestyle behaviour, by deciding to buy a certain product. Hence the following hypothesis is developed.

H3: Fashion trends have a positive significant relationship to the attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion.

Function is the use of a thing or the ability of the item to meet or satisfy human needs. According to Ahn & Back (2019), functional value refers to tangible needs such as: comfort, quality, price and functionalityfocused consumers value need over want. Al-kumaim et al., (2021) used the term clothing function to identify multiple purposes of clothing. They categorized the functions of these garments as fashion, camouflage, individuality, comfort and safety. Most people bought clothing because of the function itself represents as one of the basic physiological needs which provides comfort and protection from unpleasant external influences (Antonela et al., 2014). It is important that the clothes someone wears are suitable for the current situation and conditions so as not to cause problems and to be able to function accordingly. Customers can acquire functional values that increase their satisfaction (Ahn & Back, 2019). For example, if a person experiences positive quality despite the price, they might be satisfied with the products.

One study discusses the relationship between function and other values and demographic characteristics. Morganosky (1987) shows that the functions of fashion and individual clothing are not significantly related to the use of clothing to change mood. If people have high functionality when buying clothes, it would be reasonable to assume that function contributes positively to the attitude toward buying fast fashion. Hence, the hypothesis was

H4: The function of clothing has a positive significant relationship to attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion.

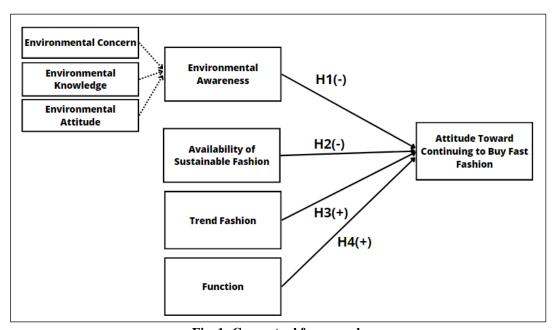


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Item measurements were adopted from previous studies and developed to the context of current studies which is to find out more about the people's reasons toward their attitude of continuing to buy fast fashion. Attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion were measured using 5 items from Song & Shin (2017)

and Setyaningtyas (2021); environmental awareness was measured through its dimensions which were environmental concern, environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. Item measurements taken from Mohiuddin *et al.*, (2018 and Dhir *et al.*, (2021); availability of sustainable fashion was measured by 5 items from Marde and Verite-Masserot (2016); fashion

trend measurements from Marde & Verite-Masserto (2016) and Zhou *et al.*, (2020) and functions by 5 times from Morganosky (1987) and Ahn & Back (2019). All measurement used a five-point Likert scale which ranges from "1 = strongly agree", to "5 = strongly disagree"

The survey was divided into two sections: the first section of the questionnaire is demographic information questions such as gender, age, expenses, and domicile. The second section measured each one of the variables which includes environmental awareness and its dimensions, attitude, availability of sustainable fashion, fashion trend, and function. The survey questionnaire used Indonesian language. The sample was Generation Z, age 18 - 25 years old in Greater Jakarta, Indonesia, from middle upper class and were aware about the impact of the fashion industry to the environment. This study used a judgemental sampling. Of 163 responses, only 148 respondents that met the

requirement. 61% of the respondents were female and 39% male. 97% of the respondents are aware of the fast fashion term, 99% bought fast fashion products, along with 96% knew the negative impact of fast fashion on the environment.

Data was analysed using SmartPLS 4.0. Because of the existence of Environmental Awareness dimensions (Environmental Concerns, Environmental Knowledge, Environment Attitude), a two-step analysis was applied to this variable, before bootstrapped it for hypothesis. The inner model were tested using 5,000 samples, one tailed bootstrapping.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All of the item's measurement is valid and reliable and met Construct Validity as shown in table below.

Table 1: Validity, Cronbach Alpha, Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability

Table 1: Validity, Cronbach Alpha, Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability Item Measurements				
	Outer Loading			
Attitude ($\alpha = 0.916$, AVE = 0.747, CR = 0.937)				
1. I often get tired of existing trends of clothes and buy a new trend of clothe	0.848			
2. I like trendy clothes	0.864			
3. I often buy new clothes				
4. I think continuing buying fast fashion are good				
5. I like buying fast fashion	0.889			
Environmental Concern ($\alpha = 0.937$, AVE = 0.788, CR = 0.949)				
1. I am concerned about worsening the environmental pollution	0.834			
2. I am concerned about the waste produced by fashion industry	0.946			
3. I am worried about the future environmental quality	0.876			
4. I try to buy clothes that can be recycle	0.869			
5. Using sustainable fashion brand is a primarily means to reduce pollution	0.910			
Environmental Knowledge ($\alpha = 0.938$, AVE = 0.795, CR = 0.951)				
1. I am very knowledgeable about environmental issues caused by fashion industry	0.841			
2. I know how to select clothing brand that can reduce the amount waste ending up in landfills	0.890			
3. Using sustainable fashion brand is a primarily means to reduce pollution	0.906			
4. Using sustainable fashion products is a substantial way to reduce the wasteful use of natural resource	0.900			
5. Using sustainable fashion products is a great way to conserve natural resources	0.917			
Environmental Attitude ($\alpha = 0.957$, AVE = 0.853, CR = 0.967)				
1. Promoting in using sustainable fashion is important	0.908			
2. Raising environmental protection awareness is important among young adults	0.928			
3. I believe when I use of sustainable fashion products, it will help in reducing pollution and also help in	0.931			
improving the environment				
4. I believe when I use of sustainable fashion products, it will help in conserving natural resources	0.922			
5. I believe when I use of sustainable fashion products, it will help in reducing the wasteful use of natural	0.929			
resources				
Availability ($\alpha = 0.886$, AVE = 0.687, CR = 0, 916)				
1. I find that Sustainable fashion is insufficiently available for purchase	0.854			
2. I think it difficult to find sustainable fashion near me	0.868			
3. The lack of availability of Sustainable fashion is often a problem	0.764			
4. I think there are less and less shelves dedicated to sustainable fashion	0.786			
5. In purchasing sustainable fashion, you do not always have a choice	0.865			
Fashion Trend ($\alpha = 0.934 =$, AVE = 0.793, CR = 0.950)				
1. I like fast fashion design	0.873			
2. By wearing fast fashion clothes, I fell up to date	0.903			
3. Fast fashion always change new clothes design or style within a certain period of time	0.906			
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Item Measurements	Outer	
	Loading	
4. Fashion trend keeps up with the time	0.851	
5. I can express myself by following the fashion trend	0.918	
Function ($\alpha = 0.892$, AVE = 0.736, CR = 0.917)		
1. I would rather buy clothing that is comfortable, even if they are not the most pleasing ones to look at	0.836	
2. When buying a coat, I get the most comfortable one, even if it's not the newest style	0.901	
3. Considering the cost, I prefer to buy clothing that provide a lot of benefit		
4. Sustainable fashion offer a better value for money than other fashion industry	0.810	
5. Buying some clothing was affordable	0.861	

Hypotheses testing revealed that all hypotheses were rejected, except for the positive influence of fashion trends on attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion. Besides that, trend of fashion could be said as the main predictor for attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion, as the path coefficient was 0.735 (73.5%). This finding has confirmed the short periods nature of fashion trends, which in this case reflecting what fast fashion stands for.

Environmental awareness was not significant in negatively influence on attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion, even their prediction is very small (-5.3%). As one of the general predictors, environmental awareness has been debated in understanding the consumer's green purchase and has been discussed in many studies. (Al-kumaim *et al.*, 2021) Individuals with a high level of environmental awareness are more likely to behave in an environmentally friendly manner. Thus, the result in this study suggests that people might

understand and highly aware with environmental awareness, it will not guarantee that they will have attitude to stop buying fast fashion or continue to continue to buy fast fashion. The level of prediction is very low compared with Fashion Trend.

Surprisingly, availability of sustainable fashion has positive relation on attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion. It can be inferenced that the more people have access to sustainable fashion, the more they will continue to buy fast fashion. According to Khare *et al.*, (2020), the term "availability" describes how easy a buyer believes they may purchase or consume a certain sustainable fashion product. However, it did not mention the influence of other factor such as price to create positive attitude. This finding is not the same as the previous research. This can be the indication that just being sustainable is not enough to move the consumer to stop buying fast fashion. Being affordable and sustainable might be the driver.

Table 2: Hypotheses Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Remarks
Environmental Awareness → Attitude Toward Continuing to Buy Fast Fashion	-0,053	0,024	0,062	0,857	0,196	Rejected
Availability of Sustainable Fashion → Attitude Toward Continuing to Buy Fast Fashion	0,191	0,186	0,054	3,497	0,000	Rejected
Trend of Fashion → Attitude Toward Continuing to Buy Fast Fashion	0,735	0,734	0,048	15,322	0,000	Accepted
Function → Attitude Toward Continuing to Buy Fast Fashion	-0,194	-0,188	0,046	4,201	0,000	Rejected

The other unexpected result was about the function of fashion. Function of fashion significantly influenced attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion, but in negative way. It was supposed to be a positive influence, but the result showed negative influence on attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion. As Antonela *et al.*, (2014) found the function of fashion represent to provide comfort and protection from unpleasant external influences. The more comfortable and protection the function, the more people will have attitude to stop continuing to buy fashion. The interpretation as long as sustainable fashion can meet the basic fashion function, it can reduce the usage of fast fashion. Referring to the mean of item that measure

Function which is "Sustainable fashion offer a better value for money than other fashion industry" which was 3.8, it can be concluded that sustainable fashion has not met the function of its fashion yet. Although the result is not as expected, however, this model can explain 77% factor that influence attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion. And it can be categorized as strong theoretical model.

Table 3: Value R. Square and R. Adjustment

	R Square	R. Adjustment
Attitude	0.766	0.756

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The reason why Gen Z still buy fast fashion although they know about the impact of fast fashion is the fashion trend. Environmental awareness although can influence Gen Z to not continuing to buy fast fashion, it is not significant. The availability of sustainable fashion is not sufficient to influence Gen Z to stop buying fast fashion, if it is not comfortable and pricey. Comfortable and pricey is the function of fashion that has negative and significant influence on attitude toward continuing to buy fast fashion.

The implication of this findings are (1) fashion industry should make sustainable fashion a new trend compared with fast fashion; (2) the comfort and affordable sustainable fashion is one of the solution to put sustainable fashion in the trend to replace fast fashion; (3) sustainable fashion should increase the awareness of its importance for Gen Z future in order to increase environmental awareness to be significant.

This study has several limitations. The sample data that are collected may not represent the whole Generation Z population. The context and timing of the analysis may have a high significant impact on the weight of each dimension and variable. Therefore, future study should expand the sample data from other countries before the generalization can be made. In addition, future studies could also explore more on various age groups, educational background, income, to validate the generalization. Furthermore, respondent behaviour or attitude can be affected by individual differences, each of the respondent might have different experience in buying fast or sustainable fashion products.

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