Impact of Sustainable Fashion Apparel Attributes and Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the antecedents of purchase intention. In doing so, this study aims to identify the relationship between sustainable fashion apparel attributes and purchase intention and in addition to it, it also measures the relationship between positive word of mouth and purchase intention. To gather the data, mall intercept method was used from Islamabad Pakistan. A sample size of 300 customers was used for the study. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between sustainable fashion apparel attributes and purchase intention. In addition to it, there lies a significant positive relationship between positive word of mouth and purchase intention. Marketing managers and practitioners can use this study in devising their strategies related to purchase intention.

Keywords: Sustainable fashion apparel attributes, Positive word of mouth, purchase intention

1. Introduction

The fashion industry is one of the main sectors causing environmental deterioration because of fast fashion and inexpensively made apparel (Grazzini et al., 2021). For example, according to Legere and Kang (2020), around 75% of fast-fashion clothing finishes up in garbage. Vintage clothing and second-hand buying emerge as alternatives to fast fashion systems to promote sustainable consumption patterns (Legere and Kang, 2020). The well-being and health of people in the context of the economy, environment, and social systems is the aim of sustainable development (Crofton, 2000). But from the manufacturing of clothing to the creation of textile materials to dumps full of artificial material, the apparel sector is a major source of environmental issues. Textile processing wastewater includes processing bath wastes from preparing, colouring, completing, cutting, and other processes. Textiles are also a chemically demanding business (US Environmental Protection Agency, 1996).

Given the fact that customers are growing more conscious of sustainability concerns, businesses must adopt environmentally friendly manufacturing practices (Blasi et al., 2020). As a result, by changing their shopping habits, customers can prolong the life of garments and reduce waste (Lo et al., 2019). This gives them a sense of moral pleasure. According to White et al. (2019), businesses that can adjust to customers' needs for sustainability have a higher chance of succeeding over the long run. But since customers continue to favour rapid style, here still remain several obstacles in the way of environmentally friendly clothing (Peters et al., 2021). This research is particularly interested in the relationship between fashion and the need to articulate one's self-concept (e.g., trendy self-image), while the slow fashion is primarily associated with ethical values.

According to study, sustainable fashion products can result in a lack of possession, even though they are becoming increasingly common and are linked to prestige (Bellezza et al., 2016). (Loussaïef et al., 2019). Current studies fall short in capturing the ways that slow style promotes possession and strengthens customers' sense of self. Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine whether self-signaling motivations drive people to consume slow fashion and how this relates to their desire to express their identities through kindness or self-interest and create the urge to purchase (Grewal et al., 2019).

1.1. Theoretical Underpinning

A cognitive-social method of behaviour analysis is suggested by the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). Four notions make up the theory of planned behavior model: perceived behavioural control, subjective norms, attitudes and intentions (Ajzen, 1985). In order to investigate the behavioural intentions of customers in the context of sustainable fashion, the current study operationalized the extended version of theory of planned behavior. According to the TPB framework, beliefs are defined as a person's assessment of the effects of a given behaviour, and positively behavioural intent results from having a favourable attitude towards a particular behaviour. Theory of planned behavior was used in a number of research to analyse the purchase of sustainable fashion (Khare and Kautish, 2021b; Saricam and Okur, 2019; Iqbal and Khan, 2019) and clothing that is organic (Khare and Varshneya, 2017). Subjective norm, as used in the theory of planned behavior, describes how someone feels pressured by society to engage in or refrain from engaging in a specific behaviour. Theory of planned behavior is a commonly used theory by social psychologists to explain social identity phenomena, such as the perception of societal and peer pressure to participate in a specific behaviour.

2. Literature Review

Although the term sustainable fashion is becoming more and more popular, it is not widely understood to mean that sustainable growth meets style. The term refers to eco-green or sustainable fashion, recyclable clothes, ethical apparel, and the slow fashion activity, including all facets of the fashion industry (Shen, Richard & Liu 2013: Calery & Cervellon 2014). In an effort to provide clarification, Henninger et al. (2016) divided sustainable fashion into categories such as vintage, vegan, artisan, second-hand, locally made, tailored, and fairly traded accredited items. These groupings allude to the uniqueness and scarcity of style, which are frequently connected to high-end labels. A sustainable method involves not just buying really environmentally friendly clothing, but also intentionally extending the life of one's clothes and minimising new purchases (Shen, Richard & Liu 2013).

Still, a definition of sustainable fashion would be lacking if it did not take environmental, economic and social aspects into account. According to certain researchers, there are similarities between environmentally friendly and luxurious clothing, including rareness and longevity from a sustainability standpoint (Hennings et al., 2013). The high-end style viewpoint is being integrated into the ecological fashion setting by considering how well their respective qualities and nature's mesh. The term "sustainable fashion" in the present research means attire made of sustainable materials, such as shirts, bottoms, skirts, sweaters, undergarments, and various additional items.

There are significant ecological and social consequences associated in the style sector's success. The primary adverse consequences of this sector are found in ecological issues like overuse of water, toxic substances and chemical fertilisers,

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microplastics that end up in the seas, too much usage of electricity, emissions of greenhouse gases, and the creation of trash (Diddi et al., 2019; Gardetti and Torres, 2017; Geiger and Keller, 2017).

In reference to the societal effects, it is feasible to highlight hazards to the safety and health of employees that can arise throughout the supply network, the insufficient labour conditions, and and the breaches of rights of people, particularly in factory farms, which usually involve minimal pay and unjust hours of work (Gardetti and Torres, 2017; Geiger and Keller, 2017; Remy et al., 2016; Westervelt, 2015). The fact that the fashion industry is among the least sustainable in the global economy is not by chance (Cherny-Scanlon and Agnes, 2016; Eryuruk, 2012; Hinsliff, 2019; Mahajan, 2012). Requests for reforms in the sector's methods grew as customers realised how their fashion decisions affected the natural environment (Jung and Jin, 2014). In response to the harmful elements of rapid style, ethical clothing, emerges as a substitute. Numerous authors describe science fiction using various meanings of the same words.

Several pertinent studies have recently examined how buyers' views and actions regarding environmentally friendly fashion items have affected the fashion sector and the importance in environmental sustainability (Lundblad and Davies, 2016). Thus, fundamental elements of sustainable fashion include clothing that adheres to transparent business rules, doesn't harm the earth or labourers, is made with a moral manufacturing method that minimises impact on the environment and utilises reused or eco-labeled resources, and is made to last for a longer period (Joergens, 2006; Shen et al., 2013).
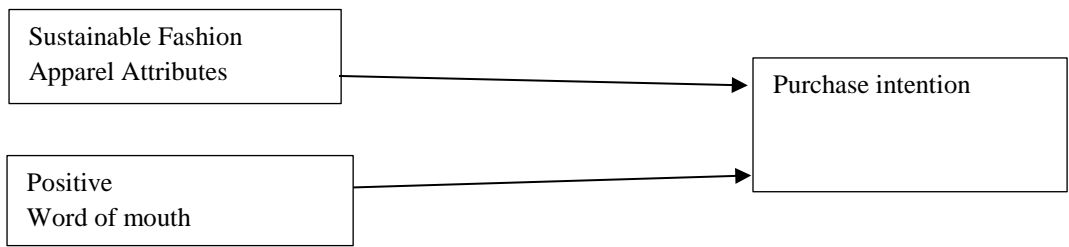
Connell (2010) highlights that sustainable fashion (SF) also includes features like multipurpose or traditional fashion designs that allow consumers to wear clothing for a longer amount of time, buy fewer items, and ultimately reduce usage. Thus, according to Henninger et al. (2016) and Shen et al. (2013), lifespan and resilience are further characteristics of environmentally friendly clothing. Additionally, as a sustainable source, consumers may turn to older styles of purchasing, upcycling or DIY style, used clothing, and traditional fashion. These methods emphasise personal style over the latest trends and improve the life of clothing by expanding its usefulness and reducing demand for new clothes (Connell, 2010; Harris et al., 2016).

It is true that very little is being done by the textile industry to produce clothing in a way that is socially and environmentally conscious. In addition to what was previously mentioned regarding the features of SF, customers can also lessen the negative environmental effects of what they buy by embracing sustainable buying, that entails purchasing, wearing, and abandoning garments that's less harmful to the environment than traditional clothing-using habits in order to decrease squander or use of resources (Connell, 2010; Geiger et al., 2018). This indicates consuming encompasses thoughts and attitudes in addition to the process of buying (Mukendi et al., 2019).

Several studies investigated the intentions of consumers and their motivations regarding the sustainability of luxury clothes (Razmus 2017). Customer reasons for buying expensive goods were divided into both intrinsic and external directions in the initial research on buy motives. Purchases were met by the inherent approach by intrinsic self-fulfillment aims and by the external approach by evaluation of the views of other people (Tsai, S 2005).

A popular hypothesis that links external drives to high-end purchases by consumers as a social and economic status indicator is the notion of extravagant spending. The purchasing intentions of sustainable fashion are influenced by and depend on both intrinsic and extrinsic drives, according to Ki and Kim (2016). Accordingly, external incentive achieves the goal through status consciousness, public self-consciousness, and the search for of the newest trends, while intrinsic drive drives the decision to buy through environmental factors, one's personal taste, and social awareness.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Sustainable Fashion     │
│ Apparel Attributes      │───────────┐
└─────────────────────────┘           │      ┌──────────────────────┐
                                       └─────▶│ Purchase intention   │
┌─────────────────────────┐           ┌─────▶│                      │
│ Positive                │           │      └──────────────────────┘
│ Word of mouth           │───────────┘
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2.1. Research Hypotheses
H1: There is a significant positive impact of sustainable fashion apparel attributes on purchase intention
H2: There is a significant positive impact of positive word of mouth on purchase intention

3. Methodology

This explanatory research study has used hypothesis testing to understand the findings. The population is limited by a number of parameters in the current research and determines the scope of data that is accessible sources of information. The mall intercept method was used to gather the data and the convenience sampling technique was used rather than probability sampling. This sample technique was chosen because it is easy to use, quick, inexpensive, and readily available to participants. Despite the fact that the individuals selected or considered into account may not be entirely reflective of the community, they were picked because they were the easiest to recruit as subjects for the research study.

Any kind of research study should look at everyone in the population, yet there are so many participants and it is not feasible to look at them all. For this reason, the non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied. Since the number of respondents was intended to be sufficiently large to represent every member of the population, this study made an effort to collect a total of 300 responses. the respondents were selected on convenience basis who visited the mall and could give the responses correctly.

This research study used structured questionnaires with close ended questions and a five point The scale for measuring sustainable fashion apparel attribute was adapted from Lee et al. (2015) with 12 items. Where as, the scale for measuring positive word of mouth was adapted from Marangoz (2007)'s study with 7 items and the scale for measuring purchase intention was adapted from Lee & Lee (2015) with 10 items. Various tests were run to support the results including correlation and regression using SPSS.

The alpha values are displayed in the reliability statistics table. Since each construct value is higher than 0.7, the instruments can be trusted to withstand more testing.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of the Instruments

Construct	Reliability Statistics
Sustainable fashion apparel attribute	.86
Positive word of mouth	.76
Purchase intention	.84

4. Analysis and Results

Version 26 of SPSS was put to use to analyse the data. The data was first analysed for missing values. In order to strengthen the outcomes, some missing variables were located and imputed. Additionally, a few significant values were identified and substituted with corresponding mean values. Correlation and regression analysis were carried out once the data's characteristics were assessed.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Variables

	SFAA	Positive WOM	PI
SFAA	1		
Positive WOM	.368**	1	
PI	.481**	.454**	1

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

Positive word of mouth, buying intention, and sustainable fashion apparel attribute are strongly positively correlated, as shown by the correlation table. There is a strong positive correlation between the constructs because none of the variables have a significant value greater than 0.05. Furthermore, the fact that each variable in this table has a correlation statistic value of 1 indicates that every construct is perfectly correlated with every other variable.

Based on the SPSS regression analysis, all of the study's hypotheses are supported. There is a noteworthy positive correlation between the sustainable fashion apparel attribute and purchase intention, as well as a similar significant positive relationship between positive word of mouth and purchase intention.

Modern advances in the cafe industry, have increased competition and driven cafes to highlight the importance of the service model, brand equity, and customer loyalty as means to improve their competitive advantage. It is observed that every single variable, such as brand equity, brand loyalty, and service quality is in a positive relationship between themselves. This shows that as the quality-of-service parts rise, brand equity and brand loyalty will as well. Furthermore, this shows that the cafes are reachable. Customers will be more loyal to a company, and it will have a stronger reputation if it can consistently show reliability, certainty, empathy, and tangibility.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Antecedent		Coeff	SE	T	p
		Y1(Purchase Intention)			
X1 (SFAA)	B_1	.112	.047	2.382	.0178
X2 (Positive WOM)	B_2	.221	.111	1.990	0.047
Constant	a_1	1.732	.471	4.614	.000

$R^2 = .34$

$F_{(295)} = 5.655$,

$p < .05$

5. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This research offers practical management and marketing applications in addition to theoretical development in academia. Based on earlier research and theories on these subjects, this study shows a high correlation between the attributes of sustainable fashion clothes, favourable word-of-mouth, and purchase intention. It thereby adds to the body of already existing research literature.

Executives and top managers will be able to make strategic choices and create strategic plans for increasing the purchase intention of the customers. Managers will work on introducing sustainable fashion apparel attributes to increase the purchasing of the customers and similarly positive word of mouth will be generated to increase the purchase intentions of the customers.

6. Direction for Future Research and Conclusion

Word-of-mouth is a crucial source of information and a significant influence on consumer behaviour. Social media is a popular communication medium in the modern era, particularly with youth. Similar to earlier forms of communication, consumers are eventually forced to connect with one another with their consumption habits in this new communication space. One of the behaviours associated with consuming is word-of-mouth communication.

Sustainable fashion clothing features and favourable word-of-mouth are identified as elements influencing behaviour. Businesses can utilise these findings to inform their marketing strategy and boost positive purchase intention.

The scope of the current inquiry is mostly restricted to Islamabad; however, it could be expanded in future investigations to encompass the nation of Pakistan. An additional gap that this study fails to deal with is the lack of multiple other variables that could influence purchasing intention. It is possible that additional predictor factors will be added to the current ones in the next investigation.

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