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Decoding the Fashion Quotient: An Empirical Study of Key Factors Influencing U.S. Generation Z's Purchase Intention toward Fast Fashion

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Abstract: With a reputation for offering stylish and on-trend clothing at pocket-friendly prices, fast fashion brands resonate with the economic realities faced by many Gen Z consumers. Gen Z consumers are not just a target consumer market but also a driving force shaping the future of the fashion industry. Their preferences, values, and behaviors impact trends, reshape retail practices, and influence the overall trajectory of the fashion landscape. The evolving discourse surrounding sustainability and conscious consumerism suggests that the future may see a recalibration of the fashion landscape, with Gen Z at the forefront of demanding more responsible and transparent practices from the fashion industry. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the factors significantly influencing U.S. Gen Z consumers' intentions to purchase fast fashion. Building on the theory of planned behavior, a research model for understanding Gen Z consumers' intentions to buy fast fashion is proposed. Attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, environmental knowledge, need for uniqueness, materialism, and fashion leadership are investigated as predictors. Moreover, we examined how environmental knowledge, need for uniqueness, materialism, and fashion leadership affect Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion products. A total of 528 eligible responses were collected for analysis through a Qualtrics online survey. The proposed model's psychometric properties were evaluated, and the hypotheses were tested using the multiple regression method. It was found that attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness, environmental knowledge, and fashion leadership significantly influenced Gen Z consumers' intentions to shop fast fashion. Additionally, Gen Z consumers' environmental knowledge, need for uniqueness, and fashion leadership significantly affect their attitudes toward fast fashion. The research model demonstrated strong explanatory power, explaining 68.9% of the variance in Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.

Keywords: Gen Z; fast fashion; environmental knowledge; fashion leadership; sustainability; conscious consumerism; purchase intention



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1. Introduction

The fashion landscape is evolving, and at the forefront of this transformation is the rising influence of Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers. Born between 1997–2012, Gen Z has become a force to be reckoned with in the realm of fashion, and a notable aspect of their preferences is the affinity for fast fashion [1]. Fast fashion refers to the rapid production of inexpensive, trendy clothing that is quickly produced to respond to the latest fashion trends [2]. The fast fashion industry is characterized by its ability to quickly and affordably replicate designs seen on the runways or in popular culture, making them accessible to a wide range of consumers [3].

With a reputation for offering stylish and on-trend clothing at pocket-friendly prices, fast fashion brands resonate with the economic realities faced by many Gen Z consumers, often characterized by financial constraints as they navigate education, entry-level jobs,

and economic uncertainties, who gravitate toward fashion that is both accessible and budget-friendly [4,5]. On the other hand, Gen Z is a sizable and economically influential cohort. As the youngest generation entering adulthood, they are becoming an increasingly important consumer segment [6]. Their sheer numbers contribute to a significant portion of the consumer market, and their spending power is on the rise as they enter the workforce and gain financial independence [7]. Gen Z consumers are not just a target consumer market but also a driving force shaping the future of the fashion industry. Their preferences, values, and behaviors impact trends, reshape retail practices, and influence the overall trajectory of the fashion landscape [8]. Fashion brands and retailers that recognize the importance of understanding and aligning with Gen Z stand to gain a competitive edge in an industry where staying relevant and resonating with evolving consumer sentiments are paramount [9].

As Gen Z continues to shape the fashion landscape, it is essential to recognize the nuanced relationship between their preferences and the broader implications of fast fashion [6,7]. While affordability and trend-driven consumption provide avenues for self-expression, the industry's environmental and ethical challenges cannot be overlooked [4]. The evolving discourse surrounding sustainability and conscious consumerism suggests that the future may see a recalibration of the fashion landscape, with Gen Z at the forefront of demanding more responsible and transparent practices from the fashion industry [10].

Therefore, this study aimed to identify the factors significantly influencing Gen Z consumers' intentions to purchase fast fashion. Specifically, the objectives of this study were three-fold. First, building on the theory of planned behavior (TPB), a research model for understanding Gen Z consumers' intentions to buy fast fashion products was proposed. Attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), environmental knowledge (EK), need for uniqueness (NFU), materialism (M), and fashion leadership (FL) were explored as predictors. Furthermore, we examined how environmental knowledge (EK), need for uniqueness (NFU), materialism (M), and fashion leadership (FL) affect Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion. Second, the determinants of Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion and their intent to purchase fast fashion are statistically determined. Finally, some practical implications are provided for fashion retailers and brands to develop an innovative business model balancing the desire for affordable, trend-driven fashion with a responsible and thoughtful approach to consumption.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Fast Fashion and Apparel Industry

The apparel industry has undergone a profound transformation with the emergence and rapid proliferation of fast fashion in the past three decades [11]. Fast fashion represents a dynamic and consumer-driven approach to apparel production and retailing, characterized by quick turnarounds, frequent style changes, and accessible pricing [4].

Fast fashion's roots can be traced back to the 1970s, with the rise of mass-market retailers aiming to deliver trendy and affordable apparel to a broader consumer base. However, the term "fast fashion" gained prominence in the late 1990s and the early 2000s as fashion brands like Zara, H&M, and Forever 21 pioneered this new approach [12,13]. The primary objective was to swiftly translate runway trends into affordable garments, making fashion accessible to a wider demographic [14].

Traditional fashion cycles, with their seasonal collections, were upended as fast fashion brands adopted a "see now, buy now" model, reducing the time it takes for a garment to move from the drawing board to store shelves. This accelerated pace allows brands to stay ahead of rapidly changing consumer preferences and capitalize on emerging trends [15]. Central to the success of fast fashion is its ability to offer a constant stream of new styles at affordable prices. This affordability is often achieved through the outsourcing of production to countries with lower labor costs and the utilization of cost-efficient materials [16]. However, this low-cost model has raised ethical concerns regarding labor practices and environmental sustainability [17].

The environmental impact of fast fashion is a subject of increasing scrutiny [10,18]. The industry's reliance on cheap and disposable apparel has led to a staggering increase in textile waste [19,20]. The "wear it once" mentality encouraged by the constant influx of new styles contributes to a culture of disposability, challenging the traditional notion of fashion as a long-term investment [21].

Despite its environmental drawbacks, fast fashion has undeniably reshaped consumer expectations and the industry at large [22]. The democratization of fashion, making trendy clothing accessible to a broader audience, has disrupted the exclusivity that once characterized the fashion world [23]. Consumers, armed with smartphones and social media, now play a more active role in shaping trends and demanding inclusivity [15].

The development of fast fashion represents a seismic shift in the apparel industry, altering how apparel is produced, consumed, disposed of, and perceived. While its accessibility and responsiveness to trends have democratized fashion, the environmental and ethical challenges it poses call for a re-evaluation of industry practices.

2.2. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen [24] introduced the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to elucidate consumer behavior by identifying underlying factors that contribute to it. The TPB posits that consumers' behavior is strongly determined by their behavioral intention, which is influenced by three crucial elements: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC). The theory's widespread application has demonstrated its effectiveness in comprehending various intentions and behaviors related to apparel consumption. Noteworthy examples include studies on second-hand clothing shopping behavior [25], the inclination to purchase eco-friendly apparel [26], engagement in slow fashion consumption [4], the donation of used apparel [27], and participation in fashion collaborative consumption [28]. The success of the TPB in diverse contexts attests to its adaptability and relevance in the current research.

2.2.1. Purchase Intention toward Fast Fashion (PI)

Consumers with a higher level of purchase intention are more likely to buy certain products or services [29]. The study of purchase intention (PI) toward fast fashion is a multifaceted exploration into the factors that influence consumers' inclination to buy from this dynamic and rapidly evolving segment of the fashion industry. As consumers are confronted with an array of choices and shifting trends, understanding the underlying mechanisms driving their intention to purchase fast fashion becomes crucial for both researchers and industry practitioners. Purchase intention is not a singularly driven phenomenon but a nuanced interplay of various elements [25,26].

2.2.2. Attitude towards Fast Fashion (AT)

Attitude refers to the extent of a person's favorable or unfavorable assessment of the behavior under consideration [30]. It is shaped by an individual's beliefs regarding the outcomes of the behavior, their values, and past encounters with the behavior. Numerous prior studies have employed attitude toward a specific behavior as a predictive measure for consumer participation in purchasing practices. For instance, a positive attitude was identified as one of the most crucial factors for consumers to embrace collaborative fashion consumption [31] or shop for second-hand clothing [25].

Research by Zheng and Chi [32] revealed that individuals exhibiting a positive attitude toward consumer environmentalism are more inclined to endorse the concept of sustainable apparel consumption. Furthermore, Pop et al. [33] indicated that a favorable attitude toward fast fashion mobile apps has been identified as the most robust predictor of consumer purchase intention toward fast fashion. This finding aligns with the observations made by McCoy et al. [31] who reported attitude as the predominant factor influencing Gen Z consumers' willingness to utilize fashion rental services. Consequently, it can be inferred

that Gen Z consumers harboring positive attitudes toward fast fashion are more likely to engage in fast fashion consumption. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is proposed below.

H1. *Attitude positively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.2.3. Subjective Norm (SN)

Subjective norm (SN) gauges the perception of how influential significant individuals in one's life, such as family, friends, or significant others, are in one's decision regarding a specific behavior [24]. It serves as an indicator of how much individuals value the opinions of others in the context of shopping and the importance they place on maintaining a positive external image beyond their personal lives [30]. The strength of the subjective norm hinges on an individual's motivation to conform to perceived social pressures and their belief in the approval or disapproval of important others regarding the behavior. When an individual perceives a robust subjective norm endorsing a particular behavior, it can significantly impact their intentions and subsequent actions [26].

Subjective norms have been a focal point in previous studies exploring fast fashion mobile app usage [33], collaborative apparel consumption [31], used clothing purchase intention [27], and eco-friendly apparel purchase [34]. Lang and Armstrong [28] reported a positive correlation between subjective norms and consumers' willingness to rent apparel items. McCoy et al. [32] demonstrated that subjective norms significantly influence the intention of U.S. Gen Z consumers to utilize fashion rental services. Bläse et al. [35] indicated that subjective norms are one of major factors driving consumer's fast fashion shopping behavior. These findings by the prior studies underscore the relevance and impact of subjective norms in the context of fashion consumption. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2. *Subjective norms positively affect Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.2.4. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) pertains to an individual's perception of how effortless or challenging it is to engage in a specific behavior [24]. It encompasses aspects of involuntary control over one's actions, such as financial constraints and the level of self-control. Consequently, individuals endowed with stronger self-control tend to exhibit more robust intentions to execute a particular behavior [32]. For instance, the perceived behavioral control of consumers in purchasing environmentally friendly apparel has been identified as a positive influence on their purchase intentions [31]. In the realm of sustainable fashion practices, Harmari et al. [36] established that PBC significantly contributed to predicting consumers' intentions to adopt apparel rental and swapping services. Similarly, Tu and Hu [37] found that the PBC toward online apparel shopping positively impacted consumers' intentions to utilize such services. However, Ganak et al. [27] cautioned that while PBC could effectively predict Gen Z consumers' intentions to shop for fashion products, it might be adversely affected by some factors such as limited accessibility and lack of awareness. This underscores the nuanced interplay of PBC in shaping Gen Z consumer intention in the context of fast fashion choices. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3. *PBC positively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.3. The Enhanced TPB: Environmental Knowledge (EK)

Environmental knowledge (EK) represents consumers' comprehension of environmental issues, encompassing their understanding of the causes and effects [32]. The level of education that consumers possess regarding environmental concerns is pivotal, particularly concerning the consumption and disposal of products. The correlation between consumers'

knowledge of the environment and their inclination to purchase environmentally friendly products has been well-established [31,34,38].

Zheng and Chi [32] indicated that consumers with higher environmental knowledge are more inclined to purchase environmentally friendly apparel. Ganak et al. [27] further emphasized the direct link between consumer environmental knowledge and their level of concern for environmental protection. Lee et al. [38] found that eco-friendly products were more appealing to consumers who showed better environmental knowledge. Papadopoulou et al. [39] demonstrated that environmental knowledge significantly reduced consumers' positive attitudes toward shopping fast fashion, thereby paving the way for sustainable behaviors. Chi et al. [34] expounded on the mediating role of attitude, highlighting that it acts as an intermediary between environmental knowledge and consumers' intentions to purchase sustainable apparel. In light of these insights, the subsequent hypotheses are formulated to deepen our understanding of the intricate relationships between environmental knowledge, attitudes, and consumer purchase intention toward fast fashion.

H4a. *Environmental knowledge negatively affects Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion.*

H4b. *Environmental knowledge negatively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.4. The Enhanced TPB: Need for Uniqueness (NFU)

The concept of the need for uniqueness (NFU) pertains to consumers whose purchasing behaviors diverge from conventional norms in terms of acquiring, using, and disposing of consumer goods [31]. These consumers actively seek a delicate balance between avoiding extreme conformity and extreme deviation. In selecting apparel, they not only aim to express their uniqueness but also strive to effectively communicate it [28]. Varied purchasing behaviors and distinctive apparel choices play a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing an individual's personal identity [15]. Furthermore, selecting products that resonate with one's self-image and personality serves as an additional means of expressing individual uniqueness [40].

The rapid turnover of novel and distinctive products within the fast fashion production model has fueled a growing demand among Gen Z consumers for a greater variety of apparel items, resulting in heightened rates of consumption characterized by shorter usage periods [41]. Fast fashion brands cater to this demand by providing consumers with access to the latest fashion trends at reduced costs and with shorter lead times. However, a potential drawback of this model for consumers is the risk of unintentionally duplicating styles, such as wearing identical designer dresses to the same event as someone else [28].

Building on these insights, NFU has been identified as a positive influencing factor for Gen Z consumers to form a positive attitude toward fast fashion and show their willingness to purchase fast fashion [28,31]. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed to explore the impact of NFU on Gen Z consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward fast fashion.

H5a. *NFU positively affects Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion.*

H5b. *NFU positively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.5. The Enhanced TPB: Materialism (M)

Materialism encompasses an individual's orientation toward wealth and the significance attributed to material possessions within their life [42]. Materialistic individuals tend to prioritize product ownership over other aspects of their existence, a disposition that is closely associated with overconsumption and poses challenges to sustainable consumption practices [42]. In the context of fashion, particularly among Gen Zers, materialistic inclinations are evident in the perceived symbolic value attached to possessions. Driven by a

desire for self-expression and influenced by societal and peer pressures, Gen Zers often regard material possessions as integral components of their identity [28]. This inclination is particularly pronounced in the realm of fast fashion, where trends evolve rapidly. Materialistic tendencies may manifest through the constant pursuit of acquiring new clothing items to uphold a desired self-image [31]. The swift turnover of styles and the continuous influx of new offerings cater to Gen Z's inclination toward staying abreast of the ever-changing fashion landscape [43]. Thus, the following hypotheses are posited to explore the intricate relationships between materialism, attitude, and Gen Z consumer purchase intention toward fast fashion.

H6a. *Materialism positively affects Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion.*

H6b. *Materialism positively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

2.6. The Enhanced TPB: Fashion Leadership (FL)

In the realm of consumer behavior within the fast fashion industry, the concept of fashion leadership emerges as a distinctive personal characteristic denoting individuals who exhibit a propensity for the early adoption of new products or services [28,31]. These consumers, colloquially referred to as pioneer buyers, demonstrate a willingness to embrace novelty and undertake risks by acquiring new items upon their initial release, thus playing a pivotal role in the genesis of nascent fashion trends and the establishment of socially accepted styles [44]. Positioned at the inception of the fashion life cycle, these individuals serve as key influencers who disseminate emergent fashion trends to broader consumer segments.

Moreover, fashion leadership often aligns with a personality trait commonly associated with the broader characteristic of openness [31]. Individuals exhibiting traits of openness, characterized by curiosity, creativity, and a propensity for unconventional thinking, manifest a keen interest in exploring novel experiences and evince a willingness to take risks with respect to fashion choices [45]. Against this backdrop, the formulation of hypotheses elucidating the interplay between fashion leadership, attitude, and consumer behavior within the fast fashion domain assumes significance, offering valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms driving consumer preferences and purchasing decisions in this dynamic marketplace.

H7a. *Fashion leadership positively affects Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion.*

H7b. *Fashion leadership positively affects Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion.*

3. Proposed Research Model and Survey Instrument

Based on the extensive review of the literature, a research model including all the proposed relationships (11 hypotheses) is illustrated in Figure 1. Attitude (AT), subjective norms (SNs), perceived behavioral control (PBC), environmental knowledge (EK), need for uniqueness (NFU), materialism (M), and fashion leadership (FL) could significantly affect Gen Z consumers' intentions to purchase fast fashion. In addition, attitude could play a mediating role between environmental knowledge (EK), need for uniqueness (NFU), materialism (M), fashion leadership (FL), and U.S. Gen Z consumers' intentions to purchase fast fashion. The demographic variables, including age, income level, gender, and education level, are included as control factors.

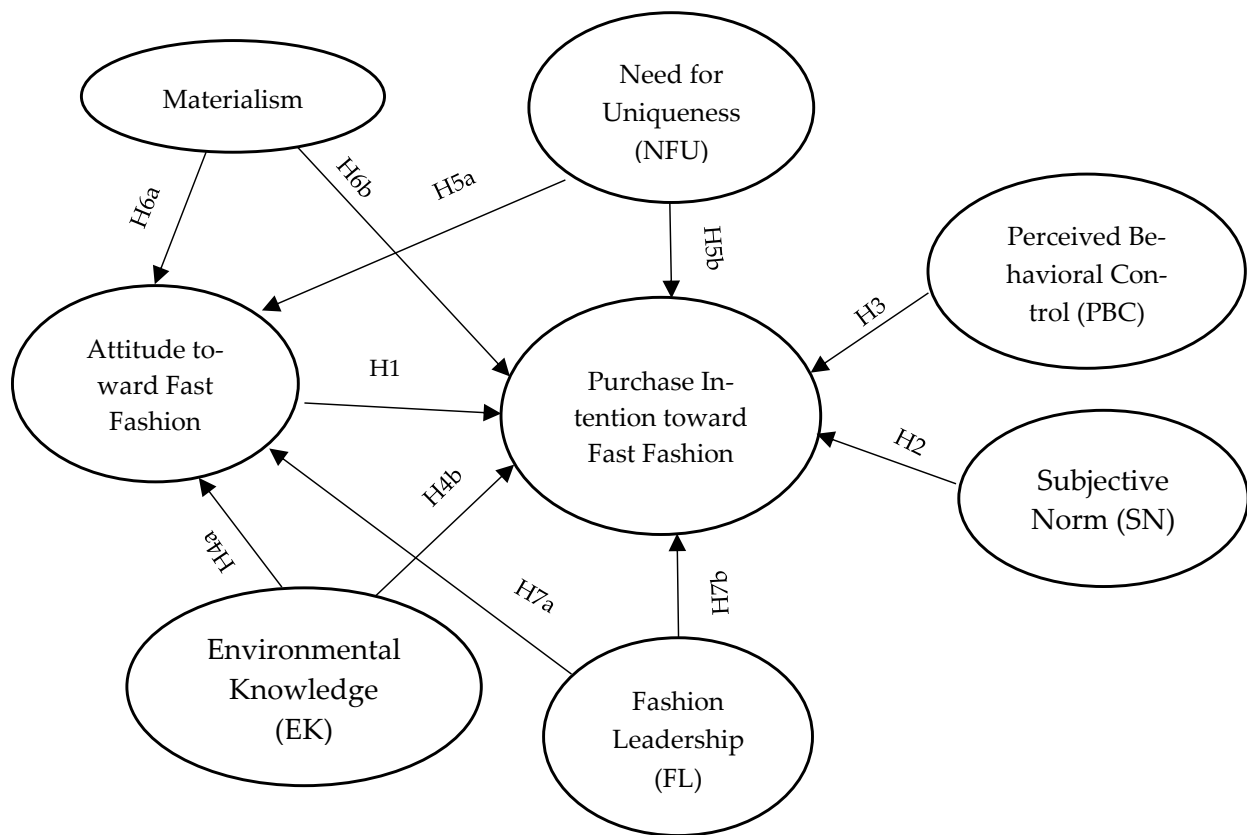


Figure 1. The proposed research model.

The attitude (AT), subjective norms (SNs), perceived behavioral control (PBC), and purchase intention (PI) scales were adapted from Zheng and Chi [32]. The environmental knowledge (EK) scale was adapted from Barbarossa and Pelsmacker [46]. The need for uniqueness (NFU) and materialism (M) scales were adapted from Lang and Armstrong [28]. The scale for fashion leadership (FL) was adapted from McCoy et al. [31]. A seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) was applied for all adapted scales. Table 1 lists all of the constructs and their corresponding measurement scales.

Table 1. Constructs and corresponding measurement items.

Construct	Measurement Items	Source
Attitude (AT)	AT1: I like the idea of fast fashion. (0.855) AT2: Buying fast fashion is a good idea. (0.801) AT3: I have a favorable attitude towards fast fashion. (0.784)	Zheng and Chi [32]
Subjective Norms (SN)	SN1: Close friends and family think it is a good idea for me to shop fast fashion. (0.820) SN2: The people who I listen to could influence me to shop fast fashion. (0.780) SN3: Important people in my life want me to shop fast fashion. (0.786)	Zheng and Chi [32]
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	PBC1: Shopping fast fashion is entirely within my control. (0.797) PBC2: I had the resources and ability to shop fast fashion. (0.782) PBC3: I have complete control over how often to shop fast fashion. (0.786)	Zheng and Ch [32]
Environmental Knowledge (EK)	EK1: I think of myself as someone who has environmental knowledge. (0.786) EK2: I know the environmental impact of apparel production, consumption, and disposal. (0.762) EK3: I have been informed on apparel sustainability issues. (0.748)	Barbarossa and Pelsmacker [46]

Table 1. Cont.

Construct	Measurement Items	Source
Need for Uniqueness (NFU)	NFU1: I often look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own. (0.771) NFU2: Often when buying fashion products, an important goal is to find something that communicates my uniqueness. (Dropped due to low factor loading) NFU3: I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image for myself that cannot be duplicated. (0.792) NFU4: I often try to find a more interesting version of ordinary products because I enjoy being original. (Dropped due to low factor loading) NFU5: I often look for new products or brands that will add to my personal uniqueness. (0.804)	Lang and Armstrong [28]
Materialism (M)	M1: I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and apparel. (0.741) M2: Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions. (0.779) M3: The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life. (0.788) M4: I like to own things that impress people. (Dropped due to low factor loading) M5: I like a lot of luxury in my life. (0.736)	Lang and Armstrong [28]
Fashion Leadership (FL)	FL1: I am aware of fashion trends and want to be one of the first to try them. (0.786) FL2: I am the first to try new fashion; therefore, many people regard me as being a fashion leader. (0.756) FL3: It is important for me to be a fashion leader. (0.718) FL4: I am usually the first to know the latest fashion trends. (0.715)	McCoy et al. [31]
Fast Fashion Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1: I intend to shop fast fashion. (0.831) PI2: I will try to buy fast fashion products. (0.748) PI3: I would like to buy fast fashion products. (0.788)	Zheng and Chi [32]

Note: factor loadings for their respective measurement items are provided in parentheses.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

In this empirical study, an online Qualtrics survey method was used to collect the primary U.S. Gen Z consumer data. The survey instrument was reviewed by faculty with relevant knowledge for accuracy and validity and then pretested with graduate students. The survey was launched through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Amazon MTurk offers several advantages for data collection, including access to a large and diverse pool of participants, cost-effectiveness compared to traditional methods, speed, and efficiency in collecting data, flexibility in study design and task types, built-in quality control mechanisms to ensure data integrity, anonymity and privacy for participants, and access to specialized skills and expertise on-demand. These benefits make Amazon MTurk a valuable platform for gathering quality data in a timely and cost-efficient manner [19,47]. A total of 528 eligible responses were received. The profile of survey respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of the survey respondents.

	Percent		Percent
<i>Gender</i>		<i>Education level</i>	
Female	39%	High school diploma	1.0%
Male	59.3%	Associate degree/some college education	3.8%
Others	1.7%	Bachelor's degree	66.7%
<i>Age</i>		Master's degree	27.2%
18	1.5%	Doctorate degree	1.3%

Table 2. Cont.

	Percent		Percent
19	0.8%	<i>Pre-tax annual income</i>	
20	2.7%	Less than \$5000	2.5%
21	3.8%	\$5000–\$9999	5.5%
22	8.1%	\$10,000–\$14,999	10.6%
23	10.2%	\$15,000–\$24,999	11.4%
24	15.2%	\$25,000–\$34,999	12.7%
25	33.5%	\$35,000–\$49,999	16.9%
26	24.5%	\$50,000–\$74,999	33.3%
<i>Annual expenditure on apparel</i>		\$75,000–\$99,999	16.1%
\$0–\$99	2.7%	More than \$100,000	2.1%
\$100–\$299	14.8%	<i>Ethnicity</i>	
\$300–\$499	18.8%	White/Caucasian	90%
\$500–\$799	26.1%	Latino/Hispanic	0.9%
\$800–\$1099	18.6%	African American	2.3%
\$1100–\$1499	10.2%	Asian, Pacific Islanders	5.1%
\$1500–\$1999	3.6%	Native American	1.7%
More than \$2000	5.3%		

Note: total 528 eligible responses.

4.2. Data Analysis

To assess the presence of common method bias, Harman’s one-factor test was conducted. This statistical analysis aims to determine if a single underlying factor can account for a significant proportion of the variance in the measured variables. The results indicate that the one-factor solution explained only 34.1% of the total variance, well below the commonly accepted threshold of 50% [48]. This suggests that common method bias is unlikely to be a major concern in the dataset.

Measurement model adequacy was then evaluated by examining unidimensionality, reliability (Cronbach’s alpha, above 0.70), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE, above 0.50), and discriminant validity (by comparing AVEs to squared correlations; AVE should be greater than squared correlation) [49–51].

As constructs were measured using multiple measurement items, average scores for each construct were calculated for subsequent analyses once the model adequacy of each construct was met [52–54]. We evaluated several statistical assumptions, including normality, multicollinearity, and correlations. Multivariate normality was assessed by analyzing skewness and kurtosis for each variable, with scores falling within the range of -2.0 to $+2.0$ indicating normality [55]. To test multicollinearity, variance inflation factors (VIFs) were examined, where values below 5.0 suggest no multicollinearity issues [56]. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to investigate the relationships between constructs, with coefficients classified as weak (0.10–0.29), medium (0.30–0.49), or strong (0.50–1.0) [57].

Finally, multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables [58]. It allows researchers to assess the extent to which changes in the independent variables predict changes in the dependent variable [59]. This method is valuable for hypothesis testing, as it provides insights into the relative importance of each predictor variable in explaining variability in the dependent variable.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Psychometric Properties of Investigated Constructs

Table 3 provides an overview of correlations and characteristics of all constructs. Notably, all skewness and kurtosis scores fall within the range of $+2.0$ to -2.0 , indicating adherence to the normality assumption. Furthermore, the VIF values for all constructs remain below five, signaling the absence of multicollinearity issues among variables. Factor loadings for the remaining measurement items to their respective constructs are notably

high (0.7 or higher) and statistically significant, while loadings to other constructs are notably low (0.3 or lower), highlighting the constructs' unidimensionality. Furthermore, Chi-square tests for all constructs were found to be insignificant, providing further evidence of unidimensionality. Additionally, Cronbach's alphas for all constructs exceed 0.70, indicating robust reliability [50]. Moreover, all constructs demonstrate AVE scores surpassing the desired threshold of 0.50, suggesting convergent validity. Additionally, all AVE scores exceed the squared corresponding correlations, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity [51].

Table 3. Correlations and psychometric properties of all constructs.

	AT	SN	PBC	EK	NFU	M	FL	PI
AT	1	0.758 **	0.737 **	0.675 **	0.649 **	0.660 **	0.713 **	0.717 **
SN	<i>0.575</i>	1	0.786 **	0.703 **	0.719 **	0.741 **	0.757 **	0.721 **
PBC	<i>0.543</i>	<i>0.618</i>	1	0.734 **	0.679 **	0.702 **	0.751 **	0.740 **
EK	<i>0.456</i>	<i>0.494</i>	<i>0.539</i>	1	0.714 **	0.697 **	0.675 **	0.699 **
NFU	<i>0.421</i>	<i>0.517</i>	<i>0.461</i>	<i>0.510</i>	1	0.730 **	0.739 **	0.665 **
M	<i>0.436</i>	<i>0.549</i>	<i>0.493</i>	<i>0.486</i>	<i>0.533</i>	1	0.785 **	0.693 **
FL	<i>0.508</i>	<i>0.573</i>	<i>0.564</i>	<i>0.456</i>	<i>0.546</i>	<i>0.516</i>	1	0.765 **
PI	<i>0.514</i>	<i>0.520</i>	<i>0.548</i>	<i>0.489</i>	<i>0.436</i>	<i>0.480</i>	<i>0.585</i>	1
Mean	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.7
S.D.	0.90	0.90	0.88	0.89	0.90	0.89	0.84	0.84
Cronbach's alpha	0.744	0.708	0.701	0.764	0.705	0.745	0.731	0.707
AVE	0.662	0.633	0.622	0.594	0.623	0.580	0.654	0.624
X ² test	0.186	0.162	0.143	0.089	0.107	0.093	0.122	0.181
Skewness	−1.28	−0.86	−0.99	−0.82	−0.75	−0.97	−0.79	−0.98
Kurtosis	1.58	1.03	1.48	1.02	0.88	1.72	0.88	1.70

Note: the italic numbers are the squared corresponding correlations. **: correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). AT = attitude, SN = subjective norms, PBC = perceived behavioral control, EK = environmental knowledge, NFU = need for uniqueness, M = materialism, FL = fashion leadership, PI = fast fashion purchase intention.

5.2. Hypothesis Testing Results and Discussions

Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing. Among 11 hypotheses, 7 of them (H1, H3, H4a, H7a, H4b, H5b, and H7b) were statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, and H2, H5a, H6a, and H6b were insignificant. Demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, education level, and income level) showed no significant impact on Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion, while education level and income level imposed significantly negative effects on Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion products.

Table 4. Results of hypothesis testing.

Hyp.	DV	IDV	Std. Coef. (β)	t-Value	Sig. at $p < 0.05$	Control Variable	Std. Coef. (β)	t-Value	Sig. at $p < 0.05$	Total R ²	Sig. at $p < 0.05$
		PI	Constant	3.475	<0.001						
H1	Y	AT	0.182	4.267	<0.001	Age	−0.0015	−0.600	0.548	0.689	<0.001 F = 103.72 (11/516)
H2	N	SN	0.060	1.245	0.214	Gender	0.028	1.085	0.278		
H3	Y	PBC	0.174	3.693	<0.001	Education	−0.007	−0.291	0.771		
H4a	Y	EK	−0.161	−3.866	<0.001	Income	−0.016	−0.614	0.539		
H5a	N	NFU	0.019	0.434	0.664						
H6a	N	M	0.043	0.964	0.335						
H7a	Y	FL	0.305	6.312	<0.001						
		AT	Constant								
H4b	Y	EK	−0.272	−6.321	<0.001	Age	0.036	1.269	0.205	0.606	<0.001 F = 99.74 (8/519)
H5b	Y	NFU	0.109	2.299	0.022	Gender	−0.030	−1.044	0.297		
H6b	N	M	0.093	1.885	0.060	Education	−0.075	−2.656	0.008		
H7b	Y	FL	0.366	7.411	<0.001	Income	−0.117	−4.189	<0.001		

Note: Y—Hypothesis supported; N—Hypothesis not supported; Std. Coef. = Standardized Coefficients, DV = Dependent variable; IDV = Independent variable; AT = attitude; SN = subjective norms; PBC = perceived behavioral control; EK = environmental knowledge; NFU = need for uniqueness; M = materialism; FL = fashion leadership; PI = fast fashion purchase intention.

Attitude (AT) positively affected Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions toward fast fashion products ($\beta = 0.182$, $t = 4.267$), supporting H1. This shows that Gen Z consumers who show positive attitudes toward fast fashion are more likely to purchase those products. Subjective norms (SN) had no significant impact on Gen Z consumers' decisions to purchase fast fashion products ($\beta = 0.060$, $t = 1.245$), failing to support H2. This suggests that influential individuals like family, friends, and influencers do not play a significant role in motivating Gen Z consumers to buy fast fashion products [60]. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) demonstrated a notable impact on Gen Z consumers' intentions to purchase fast fashion products ($\beta = 0.174$, $t = 3.693$), confirming H3. This suggests that Gen Z individuals who perceive themselves as having greater resources and access to fast fashion are more inclined to engage in fast fashion shopping activities [61]. In essence, their sense of control over their actions and the availability of resources plays a significant role in shaping their propensity to shop for fast fashion items.

Environmental knowledge (EK) negatively affected Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions towards fast fashion ($\beta = -0.16$, $t = -3.866$), supporting H4a, and their attitudes toward fast fashion ($\beta = -0.272$, $t = -6.321$), supporting H4b. This indicates that Gen Z consumers with more environmental knowledge tend to show negative attitudes toward fast fashion products and are inclined not to purchase fast fashion products [31]. Environmental knowledge plays a crucial role in reshaping Gen Z's attitude and shopping behavior toward fast fashion products [32]. The negative relationships between Gen Z's environmental knowledge and their attitude and purchase intention toward fast fashion indicate a shift toward more responsible consumption. This supports United Nations (UN) SDG 12, which aims to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Educating consumers about the environmental impact of their purchases can reduce demand for fast fashion and encourage more sustainable practices within the fashion industry.

Need for uniqueness (NFU) did not show a significant influence on Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward fast fashion, not supporting H5a ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 0.434$); however, NFU significantly affected their attitudes toward fast fashion, supporting H5b ($\beta = 0.109$, $t = 2.299$). This finding reveals that Gen Z consumers with a higher level of NFU are inclined to embrace fast fashion [28]. Aligning consumer behavior with UN SDG 13 involves promoting awareness about the environmental impact of fast fashion and encouraging sustainable alternatives. By addressing the attitudes of Gen Z consumers with high NFU, initiatives can be developed to reduce the environmental footprint of fashion consumption.

Materialism did not exert a significant influence on either Gen Z consumers' attitudes ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 0.964$) or their intentions to purchase fast fashion items ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 0.964$), thus failing to support hypotheses H6a and H6b. This implies that the level of materialism among Gen Z individuals does not significantly impact their attitudes toward fast fashion products or their inclination to purchase them [31,60]. Fashion leadership exerted a considerable influence on both Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion ($\beta = 0.366$, $t = 7.411$) and their intentions to purchase fast fashion items ($\beta = 0.305$, $t = 6.312$), confirming the hypotheses H7a and H7b. This indicates that individuals who are perceived as fashion leaders among Gen Z cohorts play a significant role in shaping their attitudes toward fast fashion products and influencing their likelihood to engage in purchasing such items [31]. These findings highlight the importance of social influence and role modeling within the Gen Z demographic in driving their consumption behaviors in the fast fashion market. Encouraging fashion leaders to endorse and advocate for sustainable fashion can steer Gen Z consumers toward more responsible consumption practices, which aligns with UN SDG 12. By advocating for brands that promote fair labor practices and the equitable treatment of workers, fashion leaders can help reduce inequalities in the fashion industry. This supports UN SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries by promoting brands that are committed to social responsibility and fair practices.

Fast fashion products appeal to Gen Z consumers by shaping their desire for status, encouraging impulsive buying behavior, capitalizing on the perception of affordability, and fulfilling the need for instant gratification. However, with the growing awareness of

environmental deterioration and climate change, an increasing number of Gen Z consumers have become more conscious of apparel consumption [4,62]. The proposed research model demonstrated strong explanatory power, explaining 68.9% of the variance in Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions toward fast fashion and 60.6% of the variance in their attitude toward fast fashion.

5.3. Identified Relationships

Figure 2 illustrates the identified relationships in the proposed research model. Attitude (AT), perceived behavioral control (PBC), environmental knowledge (EK), and fashion leadership showed significant impacts on U.S. Gen Z consumers' intent to purchase fast fashion. Attitude serves as a mediating factor between environmental knowledge (EK), need for uniqueness (NFU), fashion leadership (FL), and Gen Z consumers' intention to purchase fast fashion. There were no significant variations observed across age, gender, education level, or income level concerning their intent to purchase fast fashion. However, among Gen Z, those with higher levels of education and income tended to display a reduced inclination toward fast fashion shopping. The solid lines show the statistically significant relationships, while the dotted lines indicate the statistically insignificant relationships.

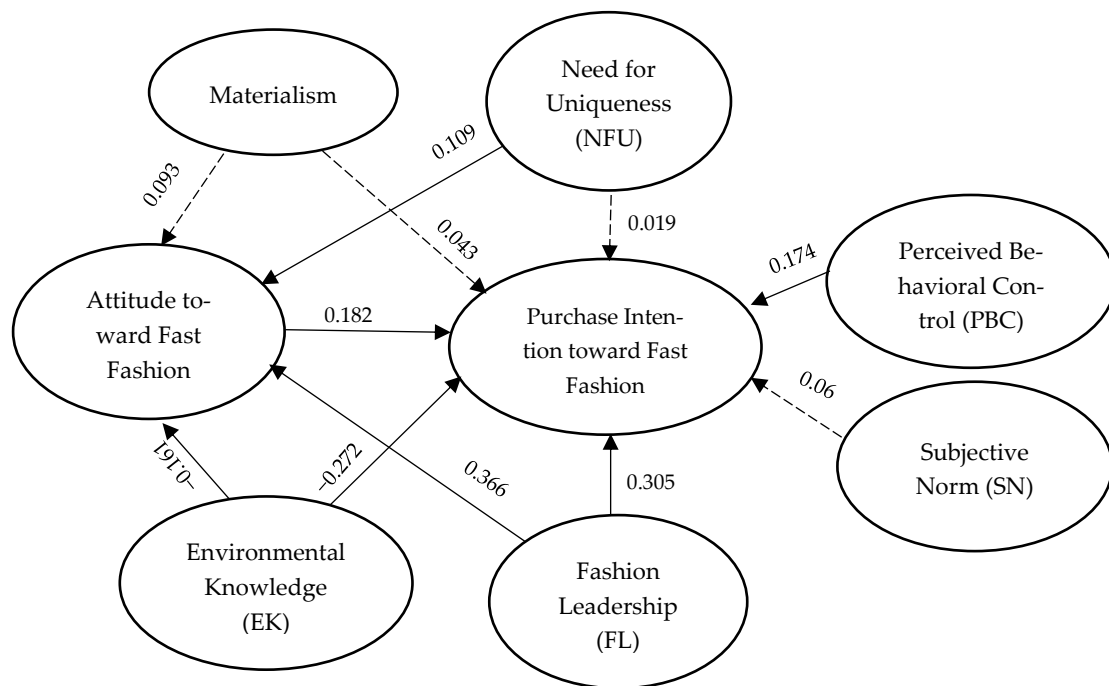


Figure 2. Identified relationships in the proposed model.

6. Conclusions and Implications

6.1. Conclusions

Fast fashion, a prevalent business model in the fashion industry, is undergoing notable shifts, yet it also raises concerns regarding environmental and ethical issues. To mitigate the environmental impact of fast fashion, it is imperative to build upon existing research findings and expand knowledge in this area. This is essential to address overconsumption, reduce pollution, and minimize waste associated with fast fashion practices. Increasing consumer awareness of the environmental repercussions of fast fashion can lead to a greater emphasis on sustainability and more informed purchasing decisions.

This study makes substantial contributions across multiple dimensions, marking a significant advancement in understanding Gen Z consumer behavior within the fast fashion landscape. First, it introduces an innovative and comprehensive Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model tailored specifically to analyzing purchase intentions in fast fashion

contexts. Unlike traditional models, this enhanced TPB integrates critical additional factors including materialism, need for uniqueness, fashion leadership, and environmental knowledge. By incorporating these elements, this study not only provides a more nuanced understanding of Gen Z consumer decision-making processes but also sheds light on previously unexplored dimensions of fast fashion consumption behavior.

Furthermore, the application of this advanced TPB model yields invaluable insights for marketers and brands operating within the fast fashion paradigm. By comprehensively examining the interplay of various psychological, social, and environmental factors influencing purchase intention, the study offers actionable guidance for marketers seeking to engage with and influence fast fashion consumers effectively. These insights hold transformative potential, as informed marketing strategies and consumer education initiatives can shape the future trajectory of the fashion industry. By fostering greater consumer awareness and understanding, such interventions have the power to mitigate the environmental impact of fast fashion and promote a broader awareness of climate change issues within the industry and beyond.

Moreover, this research underscores the pivotal role of demographic variables in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of Gen Z consumers toward fast fashion. While demographic factors may not significantly impact purchase intention directly, the study reveals that education level and income level exert a notable influence on Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion shopping. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of education or income tend to exhibit less favorable attitudes toward fast fashion consumption. These findings highlight the potential for targeted educational interventions and tailored marketing strategies to promote more sustainable consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers. By leveraging these insights, stakeholders in the fashion industry can actively contribute to fostering a more environmentally conscious and socially responsible approach to fashion consumption, thereby driving positive change and progress towards a more sustainable future.

6.2. Implications and Future Studies

The ascension of fast fashion as a dominant business model has instigated profound transformations within the fashion industry, yet its pervasive influence extends beyond mere market dynamics to encompass pressing environmental concerns such as waste, overconsumption, and pollution. This study's findings yield substantial theoretical implications, notably exemplified by the pivotal role of attitude in shaping the purchase intentions of Gen Z consumers toward fast fashion. Such insights underscore the imperative for the development of innovative strategies aimed at nurturing positive attitudes, potentially redirecting consumption patterns toward sustainable alternatives like the slow fashion approach. Moreover, the significance of environmental knowledge reveals the critical need for comprehensive information dissemination through targeted marketing campaigns to bolster consumers' awareness of the environmental ramifications of fast fashion. Consumers armed with heightened environmental knowledge demonstrate a heightened propensity to opt for eco-friendly products. Consequently, brands are compelled to enhance transparency regarding product origins and life cycles, thereby fostering consumer trust and facilitating informed choices aligned with sustainable practices.

Beyond theoretical implications, this study bears tangible practical significance for the fashion industry. By unraveling the complexities of Gen Z consumer behavior toward fast fashion, fashion brands are empowered to craft targeted strategies that resonate with their preferences and values. Insights gleaned from survey data and demographic analyses furnish brands with a comprehensive understanding of Gen Z trends and patterns, thereby informing brand initiatives and marketing campaigns. Moreover, the heightened awareness of sustainability among Gen Zers underscores the imperative for fast fashion brands to prioritize ethical business practices and eco-friendly product development. Leveraging the study's findings, fashion companies can recalibrate their product development processes, curating sustainable collections and eco-conscious offerings that resonate with Gen Z values.

Furthermore, by comprehending the needs and aspirations of Gen Z consumers, fashion brands can foster deeper connections and cultivate brand loyalty. Ultimately, this research lays the groundwork for the fashion industry's evolution toward a more environmentally responsible future, while also offering avenues for further exploration and inquiry. The practical implications derived from this study furnish fashion brands with actionable insights to craft tailored strategies that resonate with Gen Z consumers and contribute to the advancement of a sustainable fashion landscape.

Limitations in this study offer fertile ground for future research endeavors. First, the study's focus on Gen Z consumers in the U.S. restricts the generalizability of its findings to other countries or regions, given cultural nuances and divergent interpretations of fashion and sustainability. Future investigations could explore Gen Z's perceptions of fast fashion and sustainability in diverse cultural contexts or conduct cross-cultural studies to elucidate global behavioral trends. Second, the exclusive examination of Gen Z excludes insights from millennials and older generations, warranting cross-generational research to uncover similarities and disparities in attitudes toward fast fashion consumption. Notably, the skewed gender distribution among study participants, with a majority being male, presents an intriguing avenue for exploration. Future studies could delve into the role and influence of male consumers on sustainable apparel consumption, an area that has received scant attention in the current literature. Finally, this research adopted a quantitative approach to examine the statistical relationships between the constructs under investigation. While quantitative methods offer valuable insights into the magnitude and direction of these relationships, there exists an opportunity for future research to complement these findings with qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, can provide a deeper understanding of the nuanced dynamics and underlying motivations shaping these relationships. Therefore, future studies could benefit from employing mixed methods approaches to offer a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the relationships between the constructs in question.

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