

# The Real Cost Of Being Conscious: Psychological, Social, And Economic Influences On Sustainable Fashion Adoption In Indonesia

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**Abstract**— The global fashion industry contributes significantly to environmental and social damage, prompting a shift among consumers toward more sustainable alternatives such as slow fashion. This study investigates the psychological, social, and cultural drivers of sustainable fashion adoption among Indonesian Millennials and Generation Z through the lens of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). A quantitative survey was conducted with 459 respondents who had prior experience with sustainable fashion practices, such as purchasing second-hand or slow fashion items. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The model explains 95.9% of the variance in sustainable fashion attitude and 95.8% in adoption behavior, indicating a strong predictive framework. Seven hypotheses were tested, revealing that environmental concern, perceived behavioral control, and peer influence significantly affect attitudes, while attitudes, peer influence, and price sensitivity directly influence adoption behavior. Interestingly, materialism did not show a significant negative effect on sustainable fashion attitudes, suggesting a possible shift in how materialistic values manifest among consumers. These findings highlight the role of cultural values, peer dynamics, and social identity in shaping sustainable consumption. The study contributes to the CCT literature and provides practical insights for brands and policymakers to promote ethical fashion among Indonesian.

**Keywords**— *Consumer Culture Theory, Millennials and Generation Z, Slow Fashion, Sustainable Fashion Adoption.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The global fashion sector is facing heightened criticism due to its substantial environmental and social footprint. It contributes up to 10% of total carbon emissions, populating ground water, air, and soil [1]. By 2030, the projected environmental burden is estimated to reach approximately 2,791 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emission [1]. About 85% of all textile waste are also discarded in landfills every year, driven largely by the fast fashion model that promotes overproduction, short clothing lifecycles, and trend-based consumerism [2]. In 2019 Indonesia fashion industry alone produced 2.3 million tons of textile waste, and this figure is anticipated to increase to 3.5 million tons by 2030 which is a 68% increase that emphasizes the environmental burden of overconsumption habits and infrequent clothing use [3]. This paradigm has cultivated a globalized culture of disposability, especially among younger consumers exposed to materialistic values and identity construction through consumption [4].

These consumption patterns directly contradict the goals outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, which is responsible consumption and production, which emphasizes the reduction of waste production by minimizing, reusing, recycling, and avoiding excess [5]. The contrast of the consumption culture from disposability cultivated by fast fashion's affordability and accessibility, younger generations are gradually shifting their preferences toward more sustainable fashion choices, resulting in more mindful purchasing behavior [3]. Sustainable fashion involves garments that are intentionally created and produced with minimal environmental impact, promoting values such as quality, ethical labor practices, local sourcing, and extended product lifespans [6]. Among various sustainability-driven approaches, slow

fashion has garnered significant attention. As a subset of sustainable fashion adoption, slow fashion reflects both environmental responsibility and social ethics across the fashion value-chain [2]. Consumers who engage in slow fashion prioritize long-term garment use and prefer second-hand or artisan-made items, avoiding the rapid cycle of trend-based consumption [2]. This shift is increasingly driven by heightened environmental consciousness and social movements such as You Only Need One (YONO), which emphasize conscious consumption and quality over quantity [3].

Slow fashion is also gaining popularity in Indonesia, where thrifting, i.e., the act of buying second-hand clothing, has becoming culturally resonant and affordable way for youth to align with sustainability values [7]. Positioned as one of the most environmentally responsible approaches within the fashion industry, slow fashion encourages mindful consumption practices such as garment repair, support for ethical producers, and reduced frequency purchase [2]. However, despite growing awareness, the adoption of sustainable fashion behavior remains inconsistent. Many individuals, especially within the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, express sustainable values yet continue to engage with fast fashion due to barriers like price sensitivity, aesthetic preferences, peer norms, and lack of perceived behavioral control [1], [2], [8]. These contradictions between attitude and behavior reflect the complex interplay of psychological, social, and structural influences that shape fashion consumption.

To explore these tensions, this study adopts the lens of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), which views consumption as a culturally embedded and symbolically loaded practice [9]. CCT highlights how consumption is influenced not only by individual preferences but also by identity construction, marketplace dynamics, historical context, and media-driven ideologies [9]. Sustainable fashion choices go beyond practical decision-making, representing socially and symbolically meaningful behavior influenced by broader cultural norms. This research aims to explore the interconnected psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing the adoption of sustainable fashion in Indonesia, particularly among younger consumers navigating evolving norms, identities, and values.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Sustainability Fashion Adoption

Sustainable fashion adoption (SFD) refers to ongoing consumer engagement in ethical and environmentally responsible clothing behaviors such as buying second-hand, repairing garments, and prioritizing longevity and ethical sourcing [2]. These behaviors reflect a shift in values, particularly among younger consumers who associate fashion choices with personal identity and social ethics [10]. Within the CCT, such behaviors are seen as culturally constructed, where choices are shaped by symbolic narratives of environmental responsibility and authenticity [9]. Community practices, such as thrifting, further reinforce these values by embedding slow fashion in shared cultural meanings [11].

### B. Relationship of Materialism and Sustainability Fashion Attitude

Materialism (M), defined by values such as acquisition centrality, happiness through possessions, and possessions as success indicators, often contradicts sustainable fashion values [12]. Materialistic individuals are more drawn to fast fashion due to its trend-driven and status-enhancing appeal [13]. CCT emphasizes that materialism is socially constructed, often reinforced by media and advertising that associate consumption with personal identity [9]. This socially driven materialism has been linked to weaker attitudes toward sustainable fashion, as it fosters social comparison and encourages impulsive purchasing behavior [13], [14]. These characteristics have been linked to the reinforcement of unsustainable fashion behaviors and a reduced awareness of environmental concerns [12]. Thus, formulating the following hypotheses.

H1: Materialism negatively influences consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

### C. Relationship of Environmental Concern and Sustainability Fashion Attitude

Environmental concern (EC) reflects awareness of ecological issues and the willingness to act on them, and it strongly predicts sustainable fashion attitudes [15]. Consumer that has awareness of fashion's environmental impact tends to encourage more positive perceptions of sustainable alternatives [16]. This concern enhances perceived consumer effectiveness, fostering belief in the value of individual action [15]. Globally cultural identity has been shown to influence sustainable attitudes, as globally conscious consumers are more inclined to act sustainably [4]. Environmental concern has been consistently linked with more supportive attitudes toward sustainable fashion, particularly among educated youth [16]. These insights provide the basis for formulating the following hypotheses.

H2: Environmental concern positively influences consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

*D. Relationship of Perceived Behavioral Control and Sustainability Fashion Attitude*

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) reflects how easy or challenging individuals believe a certain behavior is carry out [4]. CCT extends this concept by showing that PBC is culturally influenced by social norms and symbolic meanings [9]. Consumers from cultures that promote environmental responsibility feel more capable of making sustainable choices, strengthening their attitudes [11]. Those with global cultural identity see sustainable actions as part of broader social roles, boosting their confidence in adopting such behaviors [4]. Post-purchase behaviors like repair or reuse are also culturally framed, influencing perceived control [11]. Thus, formulating the following hypotheses.

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively influences consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

*E. Relationship Peer Influence and Sustainability Fashion Attitude and Adoption*

Peer influence (PI) significantly affects Millennials' and Gen Z's sustainable fashion attitudes, as peer groups serve as cultural spaces where social norms and values are shared [17]. CCT explains that such groups reinforce sustainability when those behaviors are socially endorsed [9]. Peer endorsement, especially via online platforms and influencers, increases the perceived desirability of sustainable fashion [18]. This social influence often leads to actual behavioral change, as exposure to sustainability-minded peers strengthens one's alignment with group values, thereby encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices [18]. These insights lead to the formulation of the following hypotheses.

H4a: Peer influence positively influences consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

H4b: Peer influence positively influences consumer adoption of sustainable fashion behaviors.

*F. Relationship of Price Sensitivity and Sustainability Fashion Adoption*

Price sensitivity (PS) remains one of the key obstacles in embracing sustainable fashion adoption, especially when ethical items cost more due to fair labor and eco-friendly processes [19]. CCT posits that price sensitivity reflects not just financial limitations but also cultural values around affordability and identity [9]. For many youths, second-hand clothing offers a way to align affordability with sustainability [20]. Thrifting has cultural appeal due to its association with individuality and vintage aesthetics [7]. Yet, low-cost fast fashion still dominates, as affordability often overrides ethical concerns [21]. This attitude-behavior gap is further supported by evidence indicating that economic constraints can hinder individuals from acting on their sustainability intentions [16]. From this perspective, the study proposes the following hypotheses.

H5: Price sensitivity negatively influences consumers' adoption of sustainable fashion.

*G. Relationship of Sustainability Fashion Attitude and Sustainability Fashion Adoption*

Within the CCT framework, sustainable fashion attitudes (SFA) are shaped by symbolic meanings, identity, and cultural values [4]. These attitudes often signal ethical alignment, but an intention behavior gap persists due to structural and cultural constraints [16]. Global cultural identity has been identified as a factor that can help bridge this gap by aligning individual actions with internalized values [4]. While positive attitudes are generally associated with sustainable fashion adoption, the progression from attitude to behavior is influenced by the surrounding socio-cultural context [4]. A similar pattern has been observed among educated youth, where higher levels of environmental concern are linked to more positive perception of sustainable fashion [16]. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H6: Positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion significantly influence the adoption of sustainable fashion.

### III. METHOD

*A. Research Framework*

This study research applies a quantitative approach to thoroughly analyze the connections between the variable under in this study. The collection of quantitative involves a systematic process of obtaining information in numerical formats expressed in percentage, frequencies, and statistical figures in order to facilitate hypothesis testing between key variables (Fig. 1).

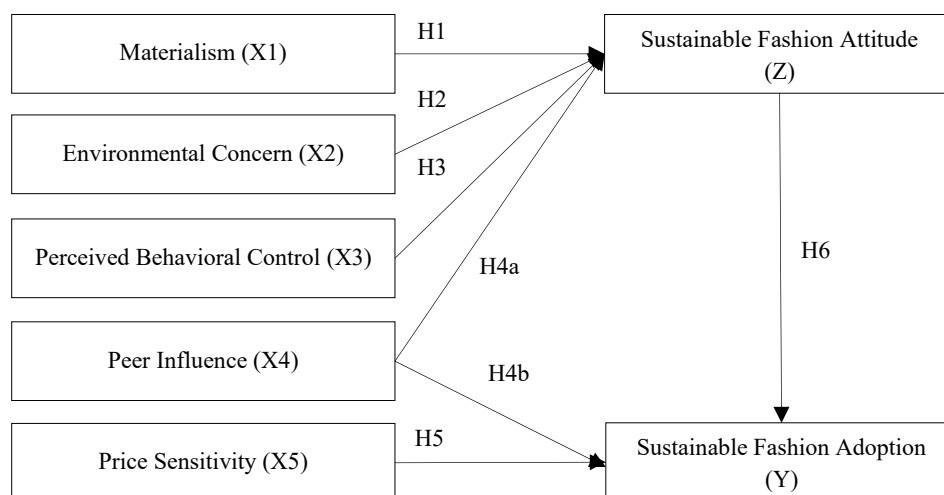


Fig. 1 Research Framework

### B. Measurement

The data collection process utilizes a structure questionnaire designed around key constructs in the model that can be seen on the Appendix I. Each item measured through a 6-point Likert's scale ranging from complete disagreement to complete agreement. This format was chosen to encourage more decisive responses and reduce central tendency bias, where participants may otherwise select neutral or "middle" options without reflecting their actual stance [22].

### C. Population and Sample

Respondents were selected through random sampling and focused on Millennials and Generation Z consumers (17 and 44 years old). Who have purchased at least one item of sustainable fashion clothing, such as slow fashion garments and thrifted apparel. The number of respondents was determined using Cochran's formula to obtain the minimum required sample size, due to the extremely large and unknown population [23]. Equation (1) define as following, n represents the minimum sample size needed, z refers to the z-value associated with selected confidence level (1.96 for 95%), p is the estimated proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.5 to maximum variability), q is calculated as 1 minus p, and e represent the acceptable margin of error (0.05 for a 5% margin).

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} \quad (1)$$

Equation (2) shows the calculation after substituting the values into the formula yields on (1). The required minimum sample size, after adjustment, was 384 respondents.

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2} \quad (2)$$

$$n = 384$$

## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

During a two-week distribution period via Google form, 463 responses were gathered. Based on the overview of participant demographics on Table II it can be concluded that 4 responses (0.86%) were excluded for not meeting the screening criteria because they have never engaged in sustainable clothing which resulting in a final eligible sample of 459 participants.

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	236	51.42
Female	233	48.58
<b>Age</b>		
17-25	100	21.79
26-30	112	24.40
31-35	179	39.00
36-40	61	13.29
41-44	7	1.53
Have purchased at least once sustainable designed clothing (slow fashion) or engaged in thrifting		
Yes	459	99.14
No	4	0.87

The majority of respondents were concentrated in urban areas within the Greater Jakarta region, reflecting a demographic closely connected to Indonesia's primary fashion markets. Notably, the largest proportion came from Tangerang (22.22%), followed by Depok (20.48%), Bogor (14.38%), DKI Jakarta (14.81%), and Bekasi (13.29%). Only a small fraction (0.87%) resided outside the Jabodetabek area, reinforcing the urban-centric nature of the sample and their potential exposure to contemporary fashion trends and sustainable consumption options.

#### A. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measuring model was evaluated using widely known criteria, such as indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity [24]. As shown in Table II, all constructs had strong internal consistency dependability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.90 to 0.95 and Composite dependability (CR) values surpassing until 0.90, much above the recommended criterion of 0.70. The average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the permissible minimum of 0.50, ranging from 0.78 (for M) to 0.84 (for SFA), indicating high convergent validity.

To evaluate discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied, as illustrated in Table III. The analysis showed that the square root of each construct's AVE found along the diagonal was consistently higher than its correlations with other construct. This indicates that each variable is statistically unique. For example, the AVE value of Environmental Concern was 0,91, which was greater than its correlations with M (0,94), PBC (0,96), and the rest of the variables. Therefore, from these findings confirm that the measurement model meets all required validity and reliability standards for further structural analysis.

TABLE 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	AVE
Materialism	0.955	0.956	0.786
Environment Concern	0.945	0.945	0.819
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.902	0.902	0.836
Peer Influence	0.947	0.947	0.824
Price Sensitivity	0.951	0.952	0.805
Sustainable Fashion Attitude	0.937	0.938	0.842
Sustainable Fashion Adoption	0.946	0.947	0.823

TABLE 3 Discriminant Validity

Variable	M	EC	PBC	PI	PS	SFA	SFD
Materialism	0.887						
Environment Concern	0.937	0.905					
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.960	0.946	0.914				
Peer Influence	0.950	0.965	0.946	0.908			
Price Sensitivity	0.956	0.965	0.946	0.972	0.897		
Sustainable Fashion Attitude	0.975	0.933	0.957	0.950	0.952	0.917	
Sustainable Fashion Adoption	0.975	0.947	0.959	0.960	0.960	0.969	0.907

#### B. Evaluation of the Structural Model

Following the confirmation of the measurement model's reliability and validity, the structural model was examined to rigorously test the hypothesized links among the latent construct [24]. From these findings, seven hypotheses were tested in this study. The analysis of H1 shows a *t*-statistic value of 0.556 (below the threshold of 1.96) and a *p*-value of 0.578 (above 0.05), indicating that the relationship between the Materialism (M) variable and Sustainable Fashion Attitude (SFA) is not statistically significant. In contrast, H2 yields a *t*-statistic of 8.335 and a *p*-value of 0.000, suggesting a strong and significant positive relationship between Environmental Concern (EC) and SFA. Similarly, H3 reports a *t*-statistic of 2.568 and a *p*-value of 0.010, confirming a significant positive influence of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) on SFA.

H4a, representing the path from Peer Influence (PI) to SFA, also demonstrates significance positive relationship with a *t*-statistic of 2.008 and a *p*-value of 0.045. In addition, H4b reveals a direct and significant effect of PI on Sustainable Fashion Adoption (SFD), with a *t*-statistic of 2.830 and *p*-value of 0.005. H5 is also confirmed, showing that Price Sensitivity (PS) significantly influences SFD (*t* = 2.518, *p* = 0.012), while H6 demonstrates a strong and statistically significant path from SFA to SFD (*t* = 7.468, *p* = 0.00).

The structural model also supports these interpretations with high explanatory power that the constructs collectively account for 95.9% of the variance in SFA and 95.8% in SFD (Fig. 2). It indicates that the model explains most of the behavioral dynamics. Among the influencing factors, EC emerges as the most dominant predictor of SFA ( $\beta$  = 0.628), followed by meaningful contributions from PBC and PI. Although materialism shows a slight negative coefficient ( $\beta$  = -0.048), it is statistically insignificant and thus does not contribute meaningfully to the formation of attitudes. Regarding adoption behavior, SFA holds the most substantial influence on SFD ( $\beta$  = 0.527), emphasizing the critical mediating role of attitudes. Additionally, both PI ( $\beta$  = 0.257) and PS ( $\beta$  = 0.209) significantly drive adoption, illustrating that social influence and price sensitivity are key adoption triggers.

The results of the hypothesis testing align closely with the conceptual foundation laid out in the literature review, particularly within the framework of CCT. As predicted, EC (H2), PBC (H3), and PI (H4a, H4b) all significantly influence either consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion or adoption. This confirms the importance of culturally embedded factors in shaping sustainable consumption patterns [4]. The findings also support the view that individuals who are aware of environmental issues and socially influenced are inclined to develop favorable attitudes and are more likely to engage in sustainable actions, especially when reinforced by peer norms and alignment with symbolic identity [15].

Moreover, the significant relationship between SFA and SFD (H6) highlights that attitudes are more likely to result in meaningful actions when shaped and reinforced by the surrounding cultural and social context [1], [16]. This also reaffirms the CCT perspective that consumption decisions, particularly in fashion, are not merely rational but deeply symbolic and socially performed. Alternatively, M (H1) did not have a significant negative effect on SFA, diverging from several previous findings [12], [13]. This may suggest that among this sample, especially Millennials and Gen Z who are often exposed to value-driven and digital sustainability narratives, materialistic values may coexist with sustainability awareness indicating a possible shift in consumer culture. Finally, the confirmation of H5, showing that PS negatively influences SFD, is consistent with prior research and the attitude-behavior gap [16]. Despite positive attitudes, economic accessibility remains a key structural barrier [20], [21].

TABLE 4 Path Coefficient

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic ( O /STDEV)	P values
M → SFA	-0.048	-0.043	0.086	0.556	0.578
EC → SFA	0.628	0.623	0.075	8.335	0.000
PBC → SFA	0.205	0.206	0.080	2.568	0.010
PI → SFA	0.205	0.205	0.102	2.008	0.045
PI → SFD	0.257	0.256	0.091	2.830	0.005
PS → SFD	0.209	0.216	0.083	2.518	0.012
SFA → SFD	0.527	0.520	0.071	7.468	0.000

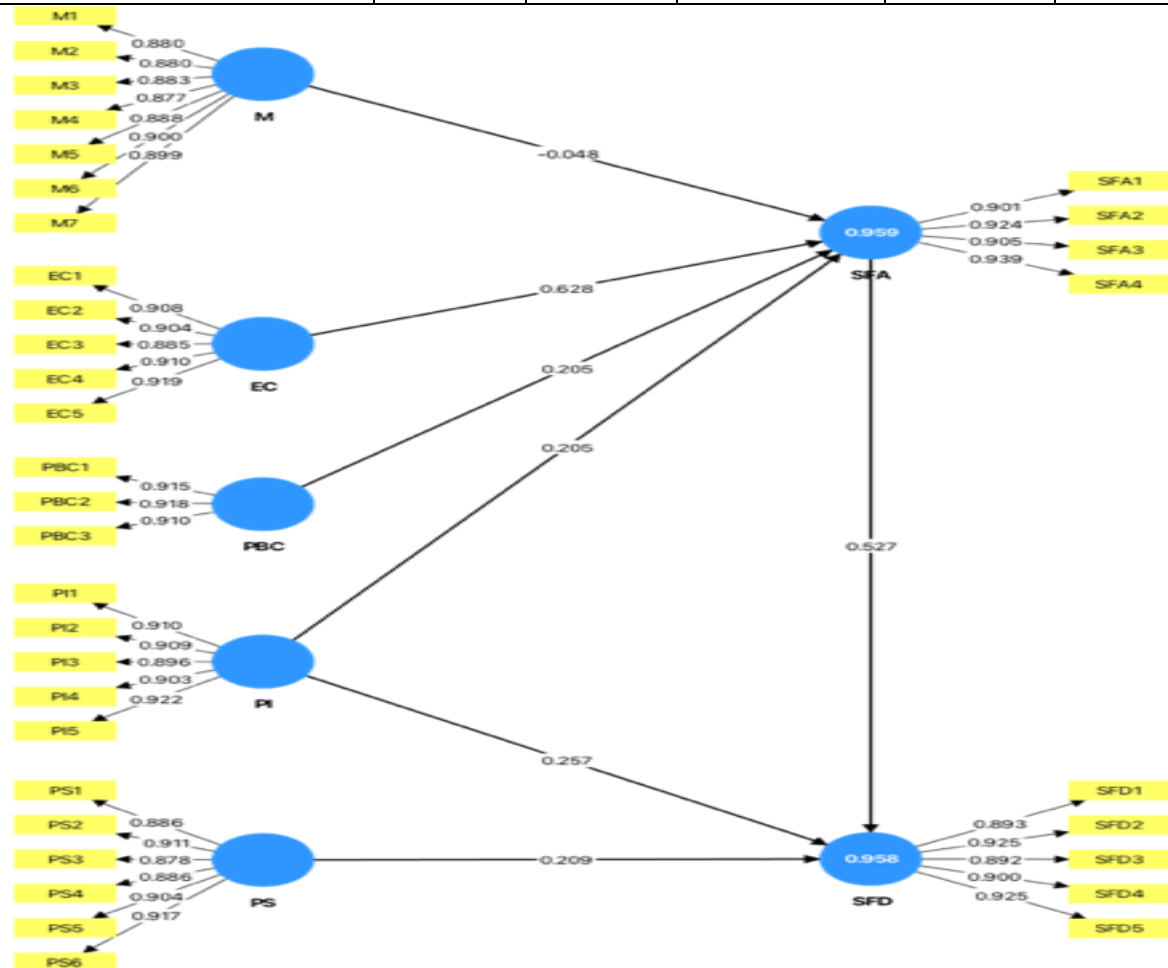


Fig. 2 Path Coefficient and T-Statistical

These findings reinforce the premise that sustainable fashion adoption in Indonesia is not solely driven by internal attitudes, but is embedded in a wider cultural, social, and economic system as posited by CCT. Thus, this study not only confirms several well-established hypotheses but also provides a more detailed of how values, identity, and structural realities intersect in shaping sustainable fashion consumption.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study was to explore the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influences sustainable fashion adoption among Indonesian Millennials and Generation Z. Guided by CCT which views consumption as a culturally and symbolically meaningful act, this perspective acknowledges that clothing choices are not only driven by practically or price, but also by identity, peer influence, and larger social values [9]. In this context, sustainable fashion adoption, such as second-hand, supporting ethical brands, and reducing consumption are closely tied to how individuals express their values and respond to evolving cultural norms. The structural model analysis revealed that several key variables significantly

influence sustainable fashion attitudes and adoptions. Specifically, EC, PBC, and PI showed significant positive relationships with SFA while PS and SFA were both strong predictors of SFD.

These findings confirm that psychological motivation, social dynamics, and practical constraints all play critical roles in shaping sustainable fashion practices. One interesting result was that M did not show a significant effect on SFA. In contrast from conventional theoretical assumptions that materialistic values inherently conflict with sustainability. This result aligns with previous findings suggesting that M is not inherently harmful to pro-environmental behavior, as its impact may be shaped by underlying psychological factors such as narcissistic tendencies or self-image strategies [12], [13]. M is considered a multifaceted construct, where some individuals pursue it as a means of gaining status, while others are motivated by a desire for security or self-expression [12].

In this study, the lack of negative effect suggest that some materialistic consumers may actually be open to sustainable choices, especially among younger consumers when those choices align with their personal style, social image, or values. To summarize, this study confirms that adopting sustainable fashion is not just about personal choices, it is shaped by a combination of social influence, cultural values, and practical concerns. By applying CCT, this research shows that young consumers in Indonesia are navigating changing cultural norms, where sustainability is becoming a part of how they define identity and lifestyle. These findings can help businesses, educators, and policymakers better understand how to support and promote more responsible fashion consumption.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 Indicator Measurement

Variable	Variable Indicator	Code	References
Materialism (X1)	<b>Acquisition Centrality</b>		[25]
	I often buy more fashion items than I actually need.	M1	
	I would rather buy than borrow something	M2	
	I enjoy expanding my fashion collection even if I already have enough	M3	
	<b>Possessions as Defining Happiness</b>		
	I feel more confident and happier when I wear luxurious items.	M4	
	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit if I cannot buy all the clothes I want.	M5	
	Buying clothes gives me pleasure.	M6	
	<b>Possessions as Defining Success</b>		
	I like to own things that impress others	M7	
Environmental Concern (X2)	<b>Fashion-Related Environmental Concern</b>		[4], [16], [18]
	I am aware that the fashion industry has a significant environmental impact.	EC1	
	I make extra efforts to buy sustainable clothes.	EC2	
	Among similar goods, I go for the one with lower negative impact on society and nature.	EC3	
	<b>General Environmental Concern</b>		
	I feel environmental problems in Indonesia are becoming more and more serious day by day.	EC4	
	I believe individuals have the responsibility to protect the environment	EC5	
Perceived Behavioral Control	I feel confident in my ability to buy sustainable fashion, if I want.	PBC1	[4]
	I feel I have control over my decision to buy sustainable fashion clothing.	PBC2	



	I have enough time, money, and access to purchase sustainable clothing.	PBC3	
Peer Influence (X4)	My friends often share their experiences and knowledge about sustainable fashion products.	PI1	[4], [17]
	I learn about environmental issues from my social group (e.g., friends, online community, influencer)	PI2	
	I notice a growing trend of sustainable fashion among people I know.	PI3	
	My friends often discuss about environmental issues or product with me.	PI4	
	People in my social circle believe buying sustainable clothing is a better choice	PI5	
Price Sensitivity (X5)	I'm willing to pay a higher price for sustainable clothing because of the benefits it offers.	PS1	[7], [16], [20], [21]
	I prefer to buy sustainable fashion, even if cheaper fast fashion alternatives are available.	PS2	
	I would buy sustainable clothing only if it's affordable.	PS3	
	I often choose fast fashion brands because they are cheaper, even if they are not sustainable.	PS4	
	I choose to thrift as a way to dress sustainably without spending too much.	PS5	
	I only thrift because it is cheaper than buying new clothes.	PS6	
Fashion Sustainable Attitude (M)	I have a positive opinion about wearing sustainable clothing.	SFA1	[4], [16]
	I like the idea of buying sustainable clothes as an expression of my personal values toward environmental protection.	SFA2	
	I believe that sustainable clothing provides health and safety benefits for everyone.	SFA3	
	I feel good when I buy sustainable clothes.	SFA4	
Fashion Sustainable Adoption (Y)	I plan to buy fashion items that are durable and long-lasting.	SFD1	[2], [10], [11]
	I have a positive tendency to purchase sustainable clothing.	SFD2	
	I recommend environmentally friendly clothing to my friends and family.	SFD3	
	I will avoid shopping at fast fashion brands, even when their items are trending.	SFD4	
	I plan to switch to eco-friendly clothing brands for my future purchases.	SFD5	

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