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Consumer Typologies of Fast Fashion Consumption: An Empirical Study of Sustainability Awareness, Consumption Pressure, and Circular Behavior

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Abstract

Fast fashion has become a major source of textile waste, and growing awareness of sustainability among young consumers does not always lead to changes in their purchasing and disposal habits. This study examines fast fashion consumption among young consumers and identifies different consumer groups based on sustainability awareness, consumption pressure, buying frequency, clothing lifespan, and circular behavior. A survey of young consumers in the San Francisco Bay Area received 103 responses, of which 101 were used for analysis. The data were examined using reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, k-means cluster analysis, ANOVA, and chi-square tests. The results show that respondents who purchased clothing more frequently tended to use their clothes for shorter periods, while greater sustainability awareness was associated with more circular practices. Four distinct consumer groups were identified: Conscious Circular Consumers, Trend-Oriented Consumers, High-Consumption Sustainability-Aware Consumers, and Low-Consumption Moderate Sustainability Consumers. The results also show that young consumers differ considerably in how their awareness translates into actual consumption and disposal practices. In particular, some consumers reported high sustainability awareness while continuing to purchase clothing frequently, highlighting a gap between what consumers know about sustainability and how they behave. These findings provide a clearer picture of the different ways young consumers engage with fast fashion and can help inform efforts to encourage longer clothing use and more circular practices.

Keywords: *Awareness; Circular Behavior; Consumption Pressure; Fast Fashion; Sustainability*

1. Introduction

As of May 2026, the world population is 8.3 billion people and there are approximately 100 billion garments produced annually which means by the time the average person turns 15, the textile industry has spewed 187.5 clothing items for that person. Textile waste creates 92 metric tons of textile waste, and it is only getting worse by the minute (Earth.Org, 2026). The fast fashion industry produces more pollution than the aviation and shipping industries together, and with the rise of brands like Shein and Zara, the fast fashion industry has grown by almost 11% from 2024 to 2025 and is estimated to be worth $291.1 billion (Cardona, 2026). Most people assume that when they donate items, they are taken care of and are repurposed. In reality “on average, 700,000 tons of used clothing gets exported overseas and 2.5 million tons of clothing are recycled. But over three million tons are incinerated, and a staggering 11 million tons get sent to landfills. Even if you donate clothing items to goodwill and other thrift stores, most of them do not get repurposed or bought, and no matter how little you consume, it’s just as important to know where your clothing comes from and how they are disposed. Both types of awareness are imperative to anyone who consumes media and fashion, which is pretty much everyone in the world. So donating is a good option, there is so much work behind the scenes that does not get shown. Donating clothing is not enough to reduce one’s carbon footprint. This environmental impact of fashion has been the subject of thousands of studies and alarmed by the scale of this environmental crisis, U.S. states have started imposing laws, such as California’s SB707 which holds textile producers responsible. But these studies mainly research fast fashion *or* sustainability awareness. They forget that these topics go hand-in-hand and most likely enable each other.

With the rise of social media, information is easily accessible from just our fingertips. Teens and young adults are the largest and the longest consumers of this industry and their buying and disposal decisions create the maximum impact in this global crisis. They are also one of the main demographics that are on social media, meaning they are most susceptible to falling into buying from fast fashion brands. Most studies, including The Impact of Social Media on Consumer Shopping Habits among Teenagers, have reported that social media is the most impactful factor that affects Gen Z's consumption patterns, even though they are aware of the importance of sustainable practices. However, consuming social media is a double-edged sword. Being online also means that young adults are exposed to content about the impacts of fast fashion, but even though they are aware, young people do not want to give up fast fashion, as it is usually cheaper and size inclusive. It is much more convenient to continue purchasing from fast fashion brands. And with more and more people viewing social media, trends are rapidly changing and only fast fashion brands can keep up with them. So naturally, adolescents tend to continue buying from these brands to maintain an up-to-date wardrobe while also being cost effective.

This study aims to dig deeper into the consumer patterns of teens in the San Francisco Bay Area, and examines fashion consumption and patterns, social media's influence on young people, disposal behavior, and sustainability attitudes among teens and young adults in the U.S. To conduct this study, a survey-based quantitative approach has been used to collect data on shopping habits, disposal practices, and sustainability perceptions. This data would identify patterns in fashion consumption and develop a consumer typology.

2. Literature Review

Understanding the Drivers of Clothing Over consumption among Teenagers in the Era of Fast Fashion targeted discovering the social, psychological, and environmental factors affecting fast fashion consumption. Their survey used google forms to collect data and had a sample population of 102 students in Chandigarh, Punjab. Their findings revealed that the most significant driver of clothing consumption was the psychological factors: emotional gratification. Following that was social, cost, and social media and environmental factors, respectively. While the study had interesting findings, it only included students from India (Jindal et al., 2025).

Survey Results on Fashion Consumption and Sustainability among Young Swedes followed a similar process. They sent out a questionnaire to students in Sweden. In that questionnaire, they gathered information about participants' knowledge of environmental effects, personalities, awareness, financial state, etc. about the participants. It was conducted over a longer period of time and asked about maintenance of clothing items that participants bought during the study. They reported that even though participants were aware of environmental and social costs, it did not translate into focusing on purchasing sustainably. Only 5.5% of the surveyed population actually followed through with making sustainable choices (Gwozdz et al., 2013).

Generation Z, Circular Fashion, and Sustainable Marketing was conducted in Galicia, Spain due to the fact that it is a hub of textile production, and now there is more emphasis on sustainability. Since this area is a huge developer of fast fashion this might result in skewed data . They incorporated a literature review and utilized quantitative data and 70%+ of responses were women, also leading to a swayed data. They gathered data on how much money the respondents spent, what brands they purchased from, the reasons for buying fast fashion, etc. They had similar findings to the previous survey. Over 60% were concerned about eco-friendly fashion consumption, but still, over 70% mainly consumed fast fashion, because of its trendiness and cost (Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025).

The Influence of Social Media Exposure and Influencers on Generation Z's Impulsive Buying of Fast Fashion Through Brand Awareness was designed to uncover how specifically social media influences fast fashion consumption. They relied on quantitative data, collected from a google form, and surveyed Indonesian 18-23 year-olds. Interestingly enough, they found that social media influencers, people who have a large platform on social media apps, have a strong and positive impact on consumers' buying habits (Yanti & Mulyono, 2026).

The use of influencer marketing in promoting sustainability towards Generation Z and late millennials in the fast fashion industry used surveys to understand the impact that fashion influencers have on young consumers' buying patterns, its effect on fast fashion brands' sales, and to comprehend why people prefer fast fashion. They did random sampling, incorporating research from other papers, with 86 responses of Southeast Asian 12-32 year-olds. The majority of respondents were Generation Z and women, while few were late Millennials. According to their research, people preferred fast fashion due to trendiness, affordability, and design; Fast fashion brands continued to grow even though people are more aware; and influencers have a small impact on buying habits (Ghassani, 2023).

Sustainable Fashion Adoption among Generation Z: Consumer behavior and Environmental Conservation in Urban India also used a questionnaire that was sent to the Gen Z population living in urban areas of India, such as

Mumbai, Thane, etc. The parameters they surveyed were affordability, brand trust, awareness, and social media activity. They found that the biggest barrier in making sustainable choices was affordability, and transparency from the brand was found to strongly impact consumer trust, especially with material origins (Karulkar et al., 2025).

From Fast Fashion to Shared Sustainability: The Role of Digital Communication and Policy in Generation Z's Consumption Habits also used qualitative content analysis to examine social media discourse related to sustainable consumption. They had a greater sample size of 202 respondents. The parameters discussed were digital communication, peer influence, sustainable attitudes, and sustainable behaviors. They reported that digital platforms have a positive impact on awareness and popularize sustainable practices. Strong correlations were found indicating that peer influence mediates the relationship between exposure to sustainability content and the adoption of responsible behaviors (Del Olmo Arriaga et al., 2025).

Green Marketing Orientation and Gen Z Consumers: Mediation of Green Brand Awareness and Psychological Satisfaction in Sustainable Fashion had 210 responses of Gen Z female college students in Indonesia. Variables investigated include green brand awareness and psychological satisfaction. They then took this data and evaluated the causes with a software based theoretical model. They learned that Green Marketing Orientation significantly and positively influences Consumer Behavior in Sustainable Fashion. Psychological Satisfaction has the strongest direct effect on Consumer Behavior. Green Brand Awareness had a statistically significant but negative impact on Consumer Behavior (Abdullah & Febrian, 2025).

As of now, the majority of studies are focused on production-brands, cheap fast fashion, environmental impact but there is a dearth of research focusing on the change in consumer behavior that led to this surge in the fast fashion industry. A study done in Chandigarh surveyed 102 students and found that psychological drivers are the most important factor in teens' clothing consumption, which was followed by social motivations, financial convenience, and media influence and environmental factors (Jindal et al., 2025). Another study in Indonesia found that while 60%+ of respondents expressed concern about sustainability in fashion, over 70% mainly consumed fast fashion because of its affordability and trendiness (Abdullah & Febrian, 2025).

3. Methodology

This section elaborates on the research methodology, objectives, data collection. Sampling and analytical framework of the study.

3.1 Objectives of the study

This study aims to examine clothing consumption patterns among young consumers by analyzing purchasing behavior, clothing usage lifespan, disposal practices, and sustainability-oriented behaviors. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine factors influencing clothing consumption and fast fashion engagement.
2. Analyze the relationship between purchase frequency, clothing lifespan, and disposal behavior.
3. Assess whether sustainability awareness translates into circular clothing practices.
4. Identify consumer segments based on consumption pressure, sustainability awareness, and circularity behavior.

3.2 Research Design

For this study, a quantitative data collection method was used. In order to collect the data, a questionnaire was sent out to students in the Palo Alto, Bay Area region. Questionnaires are commonly implemented in research. In the questionnaire, there were multiple types of questions used for data collection: multiple choice, select all that apply, ranking, and disagree-to-agree scale. A variety of question types allows multiple different expressions and explanations of consumer behavior, creating a comprehensive understanding of teenagers' habits.

3.3 Sampling and Sample Participants

For this research paper, we used the process of non-probability purposive sampling. The survey was sent out mainly to students in the Bay Area to narrow the focus of the study. At some point, majority of responses identified as female, so the form was circulated to more people who identified as male to ensure a diverse data pool.

3.4 Data Collection Period

Data collection started in April 2026 and ended in June 2026, totaling up to 103 responses. The google form was sent through WhatsApp groups and mass messaging to reach multiple people at a time. Respondents also sent to people they knew to gather a wide range of data.

3.5 Survey Instrument

Using a google form a few questions about background information were asked and many on consumption. Participants were asked their age, gender, annual household income, and if they are students, employed, etc. As for consumption behavior, they were asked how often do you buy clothes, what brands they shop for, what factors influence their purchase decisions, how often they spend on clothes, how often they wear it until they stop, how they get rid of clothes, what condition their clothes are when disposed, what does sustainable fashion mean to them, a few "how often they do __", "rate the following from 1 to 5", and what they think happens to clothes when they are disposed.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The study was anonymous, but respondents were aware that their data would be used. At the top of the form, participants were told the aim of the study, their anonymity, and their right to withdraw their response.

3.7 Analytical Framework

The study uses a quantitative analytical framework combining descriptive, reliability, correlation, clustering, and comparative analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to examine consumption patterns and disposal practices. Reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis were conducted to validate the measurement constructs. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine relationships among sustainability awareness, consumption pressure, circularity behavior, buying frequency, and clothing lifespan. K-means cluster analysis was used to identify consumer typologies, followed by ANOVA and chi-square tests to compare behavioral differences across clusters.

4. Results and Findings

This section presents the key findings on respondents' clothing consumption, sustainability awareness, circular behavior, and consumer segments.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 103 responses were collected, of which 101 were retained for analysis after excluding one incomplete response. The sample primarily consisted of adolescents and young adults. Approximately 61% of respondents belonged to the 16–18 age group, followed by 19–24 years (20%) and respondents above 24 years (17%). Only 3% of respondents were aged 13–15 years.

Regarding current status, 61% of participants were high school students, 22% were employed, 11% were college students, and 5% selected other categories. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 55% identifying as female, 43% as male, and 1% identifying as non-binary.

Household income distribution indicated that the sample was relatively affluent. Approximately 67% of respondents reported annual household incomes above $150,000, 16% reported incomes between $100,000 and $150,000, 13% between $50,000 and $100,000, and 3% below $50,000.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	13–15	3
	16–18	61
	19–24	20
	24+	17
Status	High school student	61
	College student	11
	Employed	22
	Other	5
Gender	Female	55
	Male	43

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
	Non-binary	1
Household Income	Below $50,000	3
	$50,000–$100,000	13
	$100,000–$150,000	16
	Above $150,000	67

4.2 Clothing Consumption Patterns and Usage behavior

The findings indicate relatively frequent clothing consumption among respondents. The average buying frequency score was 3.08 (SD = 1.08), suggesting that respondents generally purchased clothing every few months. The average clothing lifespan score was 3.70 (SD = 0.58), indicating that most respondents retained clothing items for extended periods before disposal. Regarding shopping preferences, fast fashion/trend-based brands were the most commonly selected category among respondents, indicating the continued influence of affordability, accessibility, and trends on clothing purchases. However, many respondents also reported using thrift/second-hand stores and online-only platforms, suggesting that sustainable and alternative shopping practices coexist alongside fast fashion consumption.

Approximately 75% of respondents reported wearing clothing items for more than one year before discarding them. This suggests that although respondents engage in regular clothing purchases, immediate disposal after short-term use is not dominant within this sample.

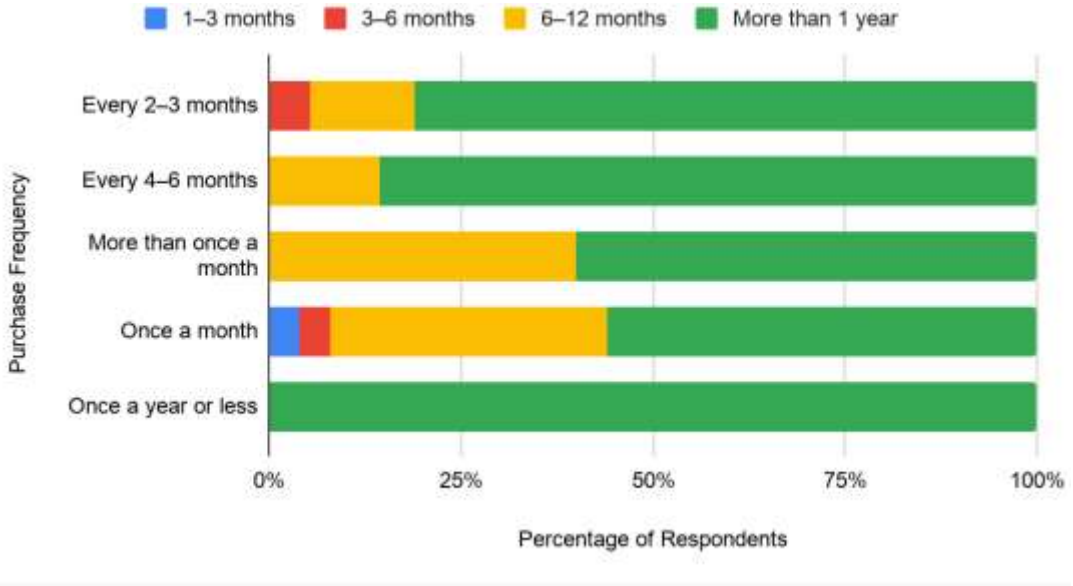


Figure 1: Buying Frequency vs Clothing Lifespan

Analysis of clothing usage duration across purchasing frequency groups indicated that most respondents retained clothing items for more than one year, regardless of how frequently they purchased new clothing. Respondents who purchased clothing once a year or less consistently reported longer usage periods. However, shorter usage durations (1–3 months) were observed among a small proportion of respondents who purchased clothing monthly, suggesting that higher purchasing frequency may be associated with faster clothing replacement cycles.

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between buying frequency and clothing lifespan ($r = -0.27$, $p = .007$), suggesting that respondents who purchased clothing more frequently tended to report shorter usage durations. Although the relationship was moderate in size, the finding supports the expected relationship between accelerated consumption cycles and reduced clothing longevity.

Table 2. Correlation between Clothing Consumption Variables

Variable	Buying Frequency	Clothing Lifespan
Buying Frequency	1.00	-0.27**
Clothing Lifespan	-0.27**	1.00

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Given the concentration of respondents in higher-income households, purchasing patterns were also examined across income categories. However, no clear pattern was observed between household income and clothing purchase frequency, suggesting that income alone may not explain variations in clothing consumption behavior within this sample.

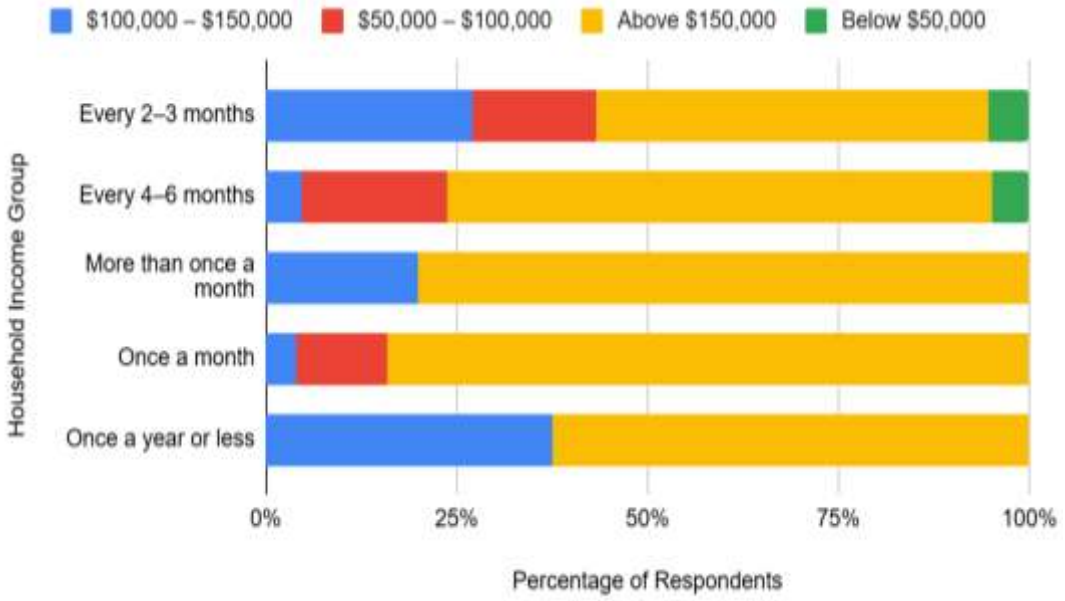


Figure 2: Household Income and Clothing Purchase Frequency

4.3 Scale Reliability and Construct Validation

Three composite indices were developed to measure sustainability awareness, consumption pressure, and circular behavior.

The Sustainability Awareness Index consisted of three items and demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$). The Consumption Pressure Index contained four items and showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the seven attitudinal items. The analysis identified a two-factor structure explaining approximately 50% of total variance after rotation. The first factor represented consumption pressure behavior, including unnecessary purchasing, trend-driven replacement, wardrobe updating pressure, and social media influence. The second factor represented sustainability orientation, including environmental awareness and reuse preferences.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics of Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Sustainability Awareness Index	3	0.70
Consumption Pressure Index	4	0.79

4.4 Relationship between Sustainability Awareness and Sustainable behavior

Descriptive analysis showed that respondents demonstrated relatively high sustainability awareness (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.86) but only moderate circular behavior (Mean = 2.87, SD = 0.86). This indicates a potential awareness–action gap, where environmental knowledge does not necessarily translate into sustainable clothing practices.

The correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between sustainability awareness and circular behavior ($r = 0.38$, $p < .001$). Therefore, although awareness alone does not completely determine sustainable behavior, respondents with greater environmental awareness were more likely to engage in reuse, repair, or donation practices.

Consumption pressure was positively associated with buying frequency ($r = 0.43$, $p < .001$) and negatively associated with clothing lifespan ($r = -0.42$, $p < .001$). This indicates that respondents experiencing stronger consumption pressures were more likely to purchase frequently and replace clothing sooner.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Key behavioral Indices

Variable	Buying Frequency	Clothing Lifespan	Circular behavior	Consumption Pressure	Sustainability Awareness
Buying Frequency	1.00	-0.27**	-0.05	0.43***	-0.24*
Clothing Lifespan	-0.27**	1.00	0.15	-0.42***	0.18
Circular behavior	-0.05	0.15	1.00	0.07	0.38***
Consumption Pressure	0.43***	-0.42***	0.07	1.00	-0.05
Sustainability Awareness	-0.24*	0.18	0.38***	-0.05	1.00

**p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

4.5 Consumer Segmentation through Cluster Analysis

A k-means cluster analysis was conducted using five behavioral indicators:

- Buying Frequency
- Clothing Lifespan
- Circular behavior Index
- Consumption Pressure Index
- Sustainability Awareness Index

A four-cluster solution was selected as it provided meaningful behavioral differentiation among respondents. The mean silhouette value was **0.19**, indicating moderate separation between groups.

The clusters represented distinct consumer profiles:

Cluster 1: Conscious Circular Consumers (n = 16)

This group demonstrated the highest circular behavior score (M = 3.79) and high sustainability awareness (M = 4.15). They also reported low consumption pressure (M = 1.67) and relatively lower buying frequency (M = 2.19).

Cluster 2: Trend-Oriented Consumers (n = 35)

This was the largest group. Respondents showed higher buying frequency (M = 3.37) but lower sustainability awareness (M = 3.06) and moderate circular behavior (M = 2.55). This group reflects consumers with stronger consumption tendencies but limited sustainable practices.

Cluster 3: High Consumption but Sustainability-Aware Consumers (n = 25)

This group reported the highest buying frequency (M = 3.60) and relatively high sustainability awareness (M = 3.65). However, consumption pressure was also relatively high (M = 2.72), suggesting a conflict between awareness and purchasing behavior.

Cluster 4: Low Consumption Moderate Sustainability Consumers (n = 25)

This group showed low consumption pressure (M = 2.00) and low buying frequency (M = 2.72) but only moderate circular behavior (M = 2.56).

Table 5. Cluster Profiles

Cluster	n	Buying Frequency	Clothing Lifespan	Circular behavior	Consumption Pressure	Sustainability Awareness
Cluster 1: Conscious Circular Consumers	16	2.19	4.00	3.79	1.67	4.15
Cluster 2: Trend-Oriented Consumers	35	3.37	3.51	2.55	2.32	3.06
Cluster 3: High Consumption Sustainability-Aware	25	3.60	3.64	3.04	2.72	3.65
Cluster 4: Low Consumption Moderate behavior	25	2.72	3.84	2.56	2.00	3.52

4.6 Differences between Consumer Segments

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine whether the identified clusters differed significantly across behavioral dimensions.

Significant differences were found for all five indicators.

Sustainability Awareness

Clusters differed significantly in sustainability awareness ($F(3,97)=7.73$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.19$).

Cluster 1 demonstrated significantly higher awareness compared with Cluster 2 ($p<.001$).

Consumption Pressure

Consumption pressure differed significantly across clusters ($F(3,97)=6.37$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.16$).

Cluster 3 showed significantly higher consumption pressure compared with Cluster 1 ($p=.001$) and Cluster 4 ($p=.014$).

Circular behavior

The strongest cluster differences were observed for circular behavior ($F(3,97)=12.28$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.28$).

Cluster 1 significantly exceeded Cluster 2 ($p<.001$), Cluster 3 ($p=.012$), and Cluster 4 ($p<.001$).

Buying Frequency

Buying frequency significantly differed across groups ($F(3,97)=9.07$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.22$).

Cluster 3 had significantly higher purchasing frequency compared with Cluster 1 ($p<.001$) and Cluster 4 ($p=.010$).

Clothing Lifespan

Clothing lifespan showed smaller but significant differences ($F(3,97)=3.49$, $p=.019$, $\eta^2=.10$)**.** Cluster 1 reported longer clothing lifespan compared with Cluster 2 ($p=.023$).

Table 6. ANOVA Results Across Consumer Clusters

Variable	F-value	p-value	Effect Size (η^2)
Sustainability Awareness	7.73	<.001	0.19
Consumption Pressure	6.37	.001	0.16
Circular behavior	12.28	<.001	0.28
Buying Frequency	9.07	<.001	0.22
Clothing Lifespan	3.49	.019	0.10

4.7 Disposal behavior and Circularity Outcomes

Disposal behavior was examined to understand how respondents managed clothing items after they were no longer used. Donation emerged as the most common disposal pathway, with 64% of respondents donating unused clothing. Approximately 21% reported keeping unused clothing in their closets, while only a small proportion

engaged in more active circular practices such as repurposing (5%) or selling (4%). Throwing away clothing was reported by 6% of respondents.

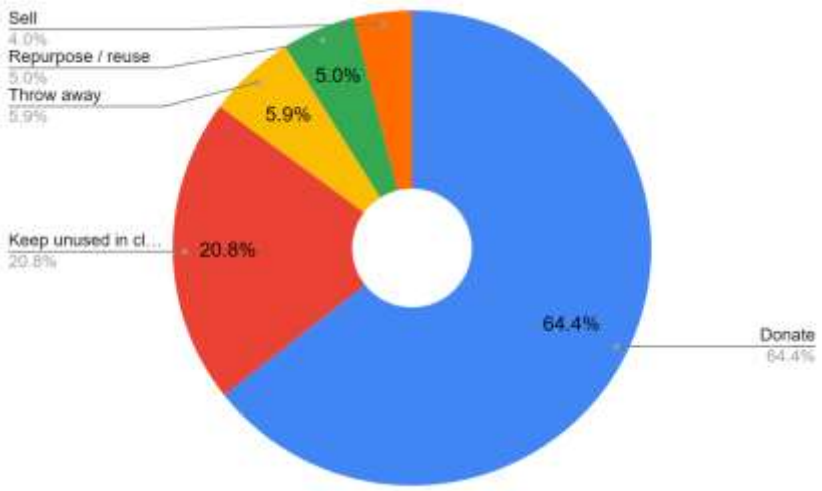


Figure 3: Clothing Disposal Practices Among Respondents

A chi-square test examined whether disposal method differed across consumer clusters. The relationship was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(12)=11.77$, p=.465, Cramer's V=.20), suggesting that cluster membership did not strongly determine disposal choices.

However, disposal condition showed significant differences across clusters ($\chi^2(12)=21.79$, p=.040, Cramer's V=.27). This indicates that consumer groups differed in the condition of clothing at the point of disposal.

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests for Disposal behavior

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Cramer's V
Disposal Method × Cluster	11.77	12	.465	0.20
Clothing Condition × Cluster	21.79	12	.040	0.27

4.8 Key Findings

The results reveal a complex relationship between clothing consumption behavior and sustainability. Respondents demonstrated relatively high awareness of environmental impacts but displayed only moderate levels of circular behavior. Consumption pressure emerged as an important factor influencing purchasing intensity and clothing replacement cycles.

The cluster analysis identified four distinct consumer segments, demonstrating that sustainability behavior is not uniform among young consumers. While a small group displayed strong alignment between awareness and sustainable practices, another group exhibited high consumption frequency despite relatively high sustainability awareness, highlighting the existence of an awareness–behavior gap.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that sustainable fashion behavior among young consumers is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including purchasing frequency, consumption pressure, sustainability awareness, and circular practices. The identified consumer segments highlight substantial variation in how awareness translates into behavior.

5. Discussion

While participants seemed to have a sense of awareness in the field of fashion sustainability, their actions did not match up with their awareness. Very few respondents reported that they considered sustainability while purchasing clothing. Those who reportedly felt more consumption pressure will buy more clothing items, especially from fast fashion brands as they are the most accessible for teenagers, but the clothing's lifespans will be negatively correlated with their buying habits. Based on the statistical analysis, a set of distinct consumer segments has been created. These segments show that sustainability awareness, purchasing frequency, and circular behavior do not always move together among young consumers.

As mentioned above, there's an apparent awareness-behavior gap, also found in Gwozdz. This is most likely due to the ubiquity of fast fashion companies in the average teens' life. With such a wide range of fast fashion

options, it's much more convenient to purchase from fast fashion brands than to scavenge for sustainable brands. With social expectations to keep up with, most fast fashion companies rapidly publish new designs each day, making it even easier for teens to keep up with trends and feed into overconsumption, aligning with the findings of Ghassani. All of these factors push young people to consume fast fashion more and more.

Consumption pressure is directly tied to purchase frequency, replacement cycles, and clothing lifespans. When there is a higher consumption pressure, these teens tend to purchase items more frequently. With more consumption, the cycles of replacement occur more often for two main reasons: The fast fashion brands they purchase from are usually of poor quality and their need to stay up-to-date with social media trends. Since it is mainly teens and young adults on social media, they are the most vulnerable to getting sucked into social media trends and are widely recognized as the largest contributors to textile waste, despite being the most aware. Eventually, these clothes end up in the landfill, polluting our environment. This pattern suggests that frequent purchasing may contribute to shorter clothing use and faster replacement cycles, particularly when consumers are also influenced by changing trends and social pressures.

Very few participants showed an alignment between awareness and sustainable behavior. Less than 10% of respondents repurposed their old clothing and less than 5% sold their old clothing items. Consumers who actively choose to thrift and those who come from sustainable cultures and environments are more likely to adopt sustainable circular practices. These results can be categorized into four different consumer types.

The first type is the Conscious Circular Consumer. This group showed the highest sustainability awareness and circular behavior, while also reporting relatively low buying frequency and consumption pressure. These consumers showed the strongest alignment between what they know about sustainability and how they behave. Their behavior suggests that sustainability awareness may be more effective when combined with lower consumption pressure and greater participation in circular practices.

The second type is a Trend-Oriented Consumer. These buyers usually expend clothing much more frequently compared to other buyers in order to keep up with the online trends. In doing so, they are usually less likely to participate in sustainable fashion or circular consumption.

Most participants were the Sustainability-Aware but Consumption-Driven Consumers. They understand the impacts of fast fashion, but their actions do not match their knowledge. Most likely they want to participate in sustainable fashion but either cannot or has not made the effort. They are consumers who understand sustainability issues but continue to consume often. This group is particularly important because it shows that awareness alone may not be enough to reduce consumption when price, convenience, trends, and social pressure continue to influence purchasing decisions.

Lastly, the Low Consumption Moderate Sustainability Consumers. They have lower purchasing regularity but not necessarily strong circular behavior. This could be only donating/throwing away old clothing or purchasing from major fast fashion brands. These consumers depict the idea that reduced consumption and sustainable practices are distinct concepts. Sometimes they go hand-in-hand, but more often than not, they aren't tied to each other. Taken together, the four consumer groups demonstrate that young consumers should not be treated as a single group when examining sustainable fashion behavior. Some respondents showed strong alignment between awareness and circular behavior, while others continued to purchase frequently despite being aware of sustainability concerns. Another group consumed less frequently without necessarily engaging in stronger circular practices. These differences highlight the importance of looking beyond sustainability awareness alone when understanding fast fashion consumption.

Of the surveyed, the dominant disposal choice was donation, possibly due to the fact that donating is convenient and efficient. After donating, the clothes are no longer the buyer's problem, whereas with selling, repairing, or repurposing, there is an extra effort that the owner needs to put in. Some may view donating as a circular habit, but that is not the case. The majority of donated clothes end up thrown away and not reused by others, making it not circular and, by extension, unsustainable. A minimal number of respondents participate in the higher circular practices, repair, reuse, resale, which are linked with a circular economy (Suárez-Eiroa et al., 2019). This study analyzes past sustainability awareness measurements and instead identifies behavioral segments among young consumers. By creating a typology of consumers, through integrating consumption pressure, clothing lifespan, and disposal behavior into one framework, there is a greater understanding of the different types of young consumers there are.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand the behavior of youth consumers and create a typology for the different types of consumers. There was an apparent awareness-behavior gap from the data collected, because of this,

awareness about eco-friendly practices does not translate into circular consumerism. Multiple factors play into buying habits, namely price, quality, and trendiness. Despite popular belief, young adult consumers are not a homogenous category of buyers. And historically, there's an impending harm of categorizing people into one group. This study created groups that youth consumers can fall into. Of course, it does not encompass all teenage buyers, but it creates more specific idea of what groups teens can fall into. There are a number of improvements that can be made both on the consumer and manufacturer side. Companies in the fashion industry should shift to creating durable products, instead of using cheap materials. This will reduce textile waste and pollution. Brands should also create and promote repair, resale, and take-back systems. Brands like H&M and Lululemon have already started initiatives to take back clothing items for recycling. Other corporations should follow in suit. Lastly, they should reduce dependence on trend-driven consumption. There shouldn't be new items on a brand's website every day to keep up with what is trending. There should be both social media efforts and information in schools that teach sustainable behavior. This will shift the conversation from awareness to practice. Along with education, we should promote circular practices among young consumers. Whether these are pop-up thrift stores in schools or social media pages about reselling, there needs to be more popularity around circular habits. Lastly, consumers should reevaluate their purchasing habits and encourage longer clothing use. These are easy steps that people can individually take to improve the health of the environment. Some limitations of this study were its convenience sampling, small sample size (n=101), high-income concentration, self-reported measures, and limited geographic diversity (concentrated in the Bay area). In the future, more research should be conducted with larger representative samples, cross-cultural comparisons, longitudinal studies, and experimental interventions to improve the knowledge surrounding this topic.

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