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Gender differences in sustainable clothing purchase intention

Suk Min Pang[1], Yvonne Lee[1*], Aishath Shanasa Shiyam[1], Lilian Anthonysamy[1]

[1]*Faculty of Management, Multimedia University, Persiaran Multimedia, 63100 Cyberjaya, Selangor, Malaysia.*

Corresponding author: Yvonne Lee (*Email: yvonne.lelee@mmu.edu.my*)

Abstract

Sustainable clothing has been gaining attention worldwide as customers become more aware of the negative impacts of fast fashion on communities and the environment. The present study aims to analyze whether the factors will influence customers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing and determine whether there is heterogeneity between gender groups in these relationships. A total of 174 respondents participated in the study through a survey link posted on social media. The model was analyzed using permutation tests and bootstrap multi-group analysis. Findings revealed that brand image and self-concept positively affect customers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing, whereas gender does not change the strength and direction of the relationships between variables. There was a significant relationship between price and sustainable clothing purchase intention for males but not for females. This study provides insights to all those involved in the fashion industry, especially within the sustainable clothing subtype of fashion. Future research should be undertaken to explore further how customers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing is affected by industry practices such as ethical sourcing and transparent disclosure of supply chain practices, as well as include different groups of customers to better understand the factors influencing customers' purchase intention towards sustainable clothing.

Keywords: Gender, Price, Purchase intention, Quality, Self-concept, Sustainable clothing.

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1. Introduction

The US$2.4 trillion global fashion industry is expected to continue growing over the coming years, including in developing countries [1]. However, the industry is losing approximately US$500 billion annually due to the non-recycling

of clothes and textile waste [2]. Looking at sustainable fashion alone, the global market size is expected to increase from US$7.8 billion in 2023 to US$33.05 billion by the year 2030, with the Asia Pacific market being the fastest-growing sustainable fashion market [3]. This shows that the Asia Pacific region is becoming more aware of the importance of sustainable fashion and the demand for more environmentally friendly products.

This need is occurring in tandem with just-in-time manufacturing and low resource costs. Fashion brands have innovated their offerings by making available attires that were worn on catwalks mere weeks ago, to shelves and racks in-store and virtually on a weekly basis. These clothes are made using materials and techniques that intentionally ensure the garments have short lifespans [4, 5]. The availability of affordable mass-produced clothing has led to the decline of the need and ability of customers to mend their clothes [6] and the increase in textile waste, for example in Europe [7, 8] and the United States [9, 10].

The move of international customer fashion brands Zara and H&M to set up stores in developing nations is the latest stage in the evolution of the fashion industry. Developing nations and less-developed nations are receiving textile waste from developed regions such as Europe and the United States. This is an issue that has gained attention, and efforts to reduce the exportation of textile waste are ongoing [11]. The throwaway culture exemplified by mass-produced fashion, better known as "fast fashion," is contrasted by an increase in preference for "slow fashion" or "sustainable fashion," wherein the purchase and use of clothes that are made to last using locally sourced materials and traditional craft [5] and the reuse of vintage fashion [12].

Customer spending on sustainable products has been on the rise in recent years [13]. The sustainability movement is important in improving the quality of people's lives while preserving the national resources for future generations. Sustainability can be identified as the capability of humans to prolong life and maintain the well-being of all lives in nature, including those of future generations [14]. According to a survey by McKinsey & Company [15] sixty-seven percent of respondents placed emphasis on the use of sustainable materials in their purchasing decisions. Thirty-eight percent of respondents hope fashion brands can reduce the brand's negative environmental impact, which is the second- highest percentage after actions towards caring for employee welfare. These sentiments are underscored by the fact that the fashion industry is the second-largest industry that pollutes the environment [16]. There is an increasing awareness of the impact of fast fashion towards in polluting air and water through the manufacturing, use and disposal of apparel and that textile waste filling up landfills, especially in developing nations today [17, 18]. Thus, many companies are slowly adopting sustainable practices that aim to decrease the negative environmental impact [16].

Nevertheless, several factors, such as gender and differences across consumer generations have influenced the consumers' intention to purchase clothing [19, 20] specifically in sustainable clothing consumption [21]. Gender plays a vital role in considering sustainable consumption as the way male and female customers think about sustainable consumption is affected by gender stereotypes and norms [22-24]. Female customers are generally perceived to engage more in sustainable consumption than men because females are more aware of environmental sustainability and sustainable initiatives [25]. Although several past studies have examined the influence of gender on sustainable consumption, some scholars have contradictory results [26]. This study will further investigate how gender affects the relationship between antecedents of purchase intention in the sustainable clothing context.

Although customers are aware of sustainable clothing, they often do not consume sustainably because of the affordability of fast fashion [27]. Previous research has also indicated that there is a lack of studies on customers' purchasing behavior of sustainable clothing [28]. Previous studies in the context of sustainable clothing mainly focused on environmental issues occurring at the post-purchase stage [29] and the lack of a framework that investigates purchase intention by integrating preceding factors such as brand image [30] and self-concept. As several research gaps remain unexplored, this study aims to provide a thorough understanding of how the four factors, namely brand image, price, quality, and self-concept, influence sustainable clothing purchase intention and how gender moderates the relationship paths of the model.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2.0 reviews literature on the relationship between the study's constructs and purchase intention. Section 3.0 elaborates on the measures, framework, hypotheses, and analysis methodologies of this paper. Section 4.0 discusses the descriptive statistics, the measurement as well as structural model outputs, and the multigroup analysis results. Section 5.0 summarizes the key results of this paper, which is then followed by Section 6.0, which discusses the practical and theoretical implications of this paper's findings.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Purchase Intention

Intention is defined by Nguyen, et al. [31] as the probability that an individual will be involved in a specific behavior. A variety of research has been conducted on different areas to examine the role of purchase intention, such as sustainable clothing [29] vintage clothing [32] online purchases [33-38] green purchases [39, 40] Halal cosmetic products [41] keto products [42] organic food [43] convenience food [44] beauty products [45] and smartphone [46].

Several past studies Abrar, et al. [47]; Kaur and Bhardwaj [48] and Jung, et al. [49] have also examined and explored the determinants of customers' purchase intention towards sustainable clothing. According to Razzaq, et al. [50] highly fashion-conscious consumers are more likely to purchase sustainable clothing as they are more environmentally conscious and prone towards sustainable fashion consumption. These groups of fashion-conscious consumers tend to be involved in sustainable fashion that will bring positive change worldwide and are tempted to purchase sustainable clothing than fast fashion. In brief, customers are said to have purchase intention towards sustainable clothing when there is a high chance that they are willing to pay and purchase the clothing over alternatives in their purchase considerations and decisions.

2.2. Quality

In general, quality significantly affects consumers' intention to purchase sustainable goods [51], and good quality is a globally preferred aspect when it comes to product purchasing or consumption. A subsequent rise in satisfaction levels can be observed when good quality products are made available to the customer. In contrast, poor quality products will dissatisfy the customer, who will be less likely to make repeated purchases [52]. Generally, consumers decide whether to purchase a product or service based on its perceived quality. A high-quality product or service increases consumers' likelihood of purchasing it, Chaerudin and Syafarudin [53]. Past studies have applied theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine consumers' intention to purchase a product, but rarely incorporate the concept of quality into the analysis [54]. Therefore, this research attempts to fill in the research gap by incorporating the concept of quality into the analysis.

Nevertheless, the retail fashion industry realizes that it is not worth the manufacturers' effort to mass produce the best quality clothing as customers nowadays are no longer looking for the best quality clothing [55]. However, this does not mean that customers do not care about the quality of clothing. Past studies revealed that quality is found to be one of the factors that primarily affect customers' clothing purchase decisions [56-59] as customers are perhaps ready to purchase clothing of better quality and that ostensibly lasts longer in order to decrease environmental impact.

2.3. Self-Concept

Products that are perceived by customers as being related to personal ideologies and beliefs, such as environmental protection and fair labor rights, will form the customer's overall self-image or self-concept that one has of themselves [58, 60, 61]. Although there is a lack of studies that examine self-concept in clothing consumption, this determinant was studied as the basis of another construct [62] and as a moderator [63] in fashion consumption or in the purchase decision of other goods [64]. In addition, sustainable clothing customers tend to be more concerned about the well-being of others compared to fast-fashion customers who are not interested in supporting sustainable causes [65-67].

Customers are known to have a higher intention to purchase when the clothing item of interest is able to reflect their self-concept or self-image [61, 62, 68-72]. Based on the self-concept theory by Sirgy [73] the way in which individuals view themselves (their actual self-concept) might in fact influence how they believe sustainable clothing is able to help them to achieve closeness to their ideal self (ideal self-concept). In other words, customers who have stronger self-concept tend to purchase sustainable clothing as they believe their clothing choices will bring them closer to their ideal selves. This is also supported by Sharma et al. [74] and Whitmarsh and O'Neill [75], who found that customers with strong self-concept are more likely to have environmentally responsible behavior reflected by their purchase of environmentally friendly products.

2.4. Brand Image

Brand image is conceptualized by Keller [76] and is defined as the customers' perception of a brand, which is reflected by the brand associations apprehended in customers' memories. Brand image has been an important factor in determining buying behavior [30, 77-80]. A strong brand image will affect customers' behavior and purchase intention, as brands with strong brand messages will stand out from all other brands in the competitive market. In short, customers are more likely to have positive attitudes, intentions, or behaviors when there is a favorable brand image [81], which in turn can enhance customers' satisfaction and loyalty [82, 83].

As a brand gets more recognition from the majority of the population, this sparks an interest amongst potential customers [84, 85]. Generally, brand image helps increase customer awareness about a particular brand and differentiate it from another brand [86]. If a brand has a good and positive brand image, the brand will stand out from the rest of its competitors in the market. Customers are often attracted by companies with a positive brand image, which leads to a positive perception towards the brand and increases their intention to purchase from the brand [87].

2.5. Price

Past researchers have highlighted that price is an important factor affecting consumers' intention to purchase a product or service [88]. Green products are generally higher in price than conventional products, which makes it a barrier to deter consumers from purchasing green products [89]. Furthermore, price-conscious consumers are less likely to purchase high-priced green products, while consumers with strong environmental awareness tend to purchase green products. This is supported by Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke [90], whose study has shown that environmentally-conscious consumers tend to have lower price sensitivity than conventional consumers, thus, this group of consumers who have a high concern for the environment are more likely to spend more to purchase green products.

Price was found to have a significant effect on consumer behavior in the clothing industry [91]. High prices have been posited as one of the barriers to purchasing sustainable clothing [32, 57, 92-94]. Sustainable clothing is typically priced higher than conventional clothing, as there are strict rules and criteria that clothing manufacturers must meet before they can label their product as sustainable [95]. However, several past studies argue that high prices are not a key barrier, especially to green customers, as these customers are more willing to pay higher prices for sustainable products and services [96-98]. Customers who are concerned about the environmental impact caused by mass production will also be interested in other sustainable practices, such as the purchase of sustainable clothing. This type of responsible, sustainable customer tends to be less price-sensitive. In other words, price is not necessarily the primary factor that influences their sustainable purchase intention [99].

2.6. Gender

Gender has an important and significant impact on the purchasing process. Gender differences can lead to different decisions made during the purchasing process, as male and female consumers tend to evaluate a product's quality and

performance differently [100]. Gender has been extensively investigated as a moderator in different contexts of past research, such as the banking industry [101], compulsive buying behavior [102], online purchase behaviors [103], customer loyalty in fast food restaurants [100], online food delivery services [104], organizational citizenship behavior [105], electronic payment technology [106], and mobile banking services [107]. There is a lack of studies that investigate the moderating effects of gender in the context of sustainable clothing; thus, investigating the moderating effects of gender on consumers' purchase intention towards sustainable clothing is necessary, as it may contribute to a better understanding of different gender groups while minimizing the research gaps within past studies.

In terms of gender, females are more likely to consider the quality of sustainable clothing before they make purchase decisions [108] compared to males. However, Harris et al. [57] argued that quality is not the primary factor that influences purchase intention, as customers are not able to evaluate the quality of clothing when they make the purchase. Instead of quality, customers might consider other physical characteristics such as brand name, types of fabric used, and brand name when making purchases. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

With regards to self-concept, [109] found that females with stronger self-concept tend to be more independent in their clothing purchasing decisions as compared to those with weaker self-concept. Female customers tend to use sustainable clothing to express self-identity and self-concept [110]. In addition, several past studies [108, 111] also revealed that customers from both genders with strong self-concept are more concerned about clothing and more likely to purchase clothing that enhances their appearances and social appeal. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

The effect of brand image on purchase intention can be varied based on gender. Although past studies found that customers tend to buy clothing from a well-known brand regardless of gender [112, 113] a recent study by Hageman, et al. [25] revealed that women tend to be more likely to exhibit sustainable behavior than men in their purchasing and brands that embody sustainability are preferred by women. This is because women tend to be involved in sustainable development initiatives, and they certainly play an important role in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the sustainable development efforts [114]. Furthermore, a study by Rahman et al. [56] found that males are more likely to rely on brand name and brand image in their purchasing decisions compared to females, as females are able to judge the quality of clothing based on physical characteristics such as fabric and style. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Customers are willing to purchase clothing that follows their set of values, which helps in conserving the environment [115]. However, sustainable clothing is often high in price. It was found that males are more likely to be affected by the price tag than females when they purchase clothing, especially sustainable clothing [56, 108]. However, Lee et al. [116] argue that females are more willing to spend more time on fashion and pay higher prices for clothing, compared to males. A similar result was also shown in a past study by Austgulen et al. [117] that females are more willing to purchase environmentally friendly products as they are more concerned about sustainability as compared to males. Therefore, the hypotheses for this study are as follows:

$H_{1:}$ There is a significant difference in the relationship between quality and purchase intention between female and male consumers.

$H_{2:}$ There is a significant difference in the relationship between self-concept and purchase intention between female and male consumers.

$H_{3:}$ There is a significant difference in the relationship between brand image and purchase intention between female and male consumers.

$H_{4:}$ There is a significant difference in the relationship between price and purchase intention between female and male consumers.

The hypotheses above are reflected in the research model shown in Figure 1.

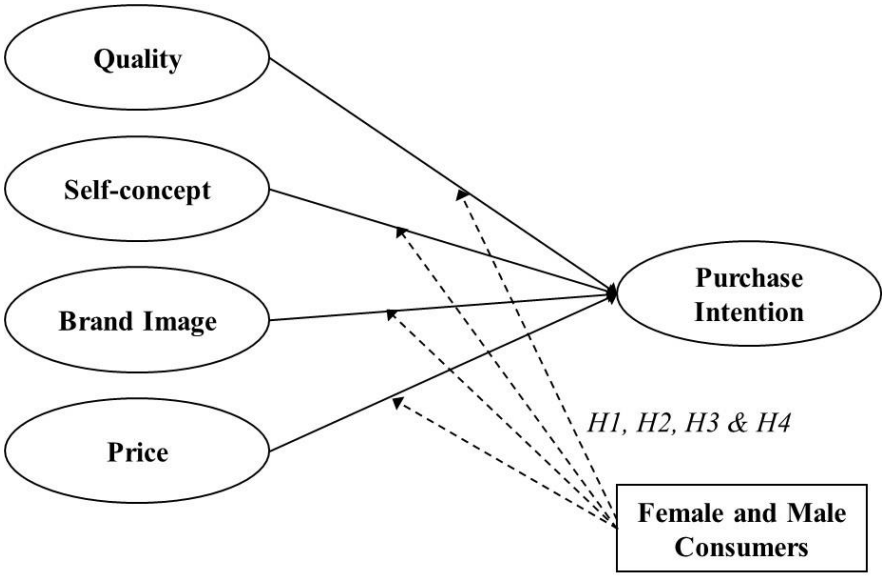

Figure 1.
Research Model.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Sample and Procedure

The study targeted a diverse global sample comprising male and female respondents aged 18 to 65. This demographic was selected to comprehensively evaluate the influence of gender on the determinants of sustainable clothing purchase intention. Given the global focus, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how gender-specific factors drive sustainable purchasing behavior across different cultural and socio-economic contexts. An online survey link was uploaded and posted on several focus group forums on social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter for data collection. Since it was not possible to obtain a sampling frame from the local authorities, convenience sampling was employed in this study. Out of 228 responses received, a total of 174 responses were valid and thus included in this study. In order to analyze whether there is heterogeneity across gender groups for the proposed conceptual model, five responses were removed from analysis as the gender responses were not of a binary nature and saved for future analysis.

SPSS and SmartPLS analytical tools were used to analyze the data and the relationships between the variables through univariate data analysis and partial least squares-structured equation modelling (PLS-SEM), respectively. PLS-SEM has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, PLS-SEM is particularly useful in handling complex models with multiple constructs and indicators, as is the case in the study. It enables the prediction of latent constructs and a solid management of both reflective and formative measurement models efficiently [118]. Secondly, given the constraints of the sample size and the exploratory nature of the study, PLS-SEM is a suitable choice. OLS regression requires larger sample sizes to ensure reliable estimates [119], whereas PLS-SEM can provide robust results even with smaller samples. Thirdly, the study was designed to maximize the explained variance of the dependent variable, which aligns well with the strengths of PLS-SEM [120].

Question P3 was reversed as it was initially negatively-worded. The respondents' demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1. The majority of respondents (70.7%) were younger than 35 years old and female (56.3%). They are quite educated, with fewer than 20% having only secondary school (high school) education. More than 95% have regular incomes or allowances and are regular shoppers for clothes, with the largest percentage shopping for clothes once every two to three months.

Table 1.
Demographic profiles of respondents (N = 174).

Measure	Item	Frequency	(%)
Sex	Female	98	56.3
	Male	76	43.7
Age	Below 22	8	4.6
	22-27	60	34.5
	28-35	55	31.6
	36-43	32	18.4
	44-51	13	7.5
	52-59	3	1.7
	60-67	1	0.6
	68 and above	2	1.1
Education	GCSEs / SPM / O-Levels / High School Diploma	33	19
	A-Levels/ STPM/ Diploma/ Associate Degree/ CEGEP	98	56.3
	Bachelor's Degree	38	21.8
	Master's Degree	4	2.3
	Professional Qualification	1	0.6
Monthly Income	No Income	9	5.2
	Under $ 250	19	10.9
	$ 250 - $ 350	9	5.2
	$ 350 - $ 600	20	11.5
	$ 600 - $ 700	7	4
	$ 700 - $ 1000	21	12.1
	Above $ 1000	87	50
	Not Disclosed	2	1.1
Clothing Purchase Frequency	1-2 times a month	32	18.4
	More than 2-3 times a month	11	6.3
	Once every 2-3 months	51	29.3
	Once every 6 months	32	18.4
	Less than two times a year	38	21.8
	Not Disclosed	8	4.6

3.2. Measurement Items

The measurement items of the five constructs and the gender variable, as shown in the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1), were adopted and adapted from past studies' validated scales. Measurement items for quality were adapted from Knight and Young Kim [121] items for self-concept were adapted from Barber, et al. [122]; Joy, et al. [4] and Pereira, et al.

[123] items for brand image were adapted from Wong [77]; Islam and Hussain [124] and Hegner, et al. [125] items for price were adapted from Chakraborty and Sadachar [9] and Kim and Bye [10] while items for purchase intention were adapted from Chen, et al. [126]. All the scales mentioned were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The mean and standard deviation values of the Quality, Self-Concept, Brand Image, Price, and Purchase intention items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Item Analysis.

		Female		**Male**	
Construct	Item	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Quality	Q1: I prefer to purchase high-quality clothing because I believe it is more durable and reliable.	4.2041	0.8118	4.4868	0.6428
	Q2: I believe high-quality clothing has more value in comparison to low-quality clothing.	4.2449	0.8742	4.4079	0.8821
	Q3: I prefer not to purchase low-quality clothing.	3.7755	1.1624	3.7763	1.0276
Self-Concept	SC1: I tend to make environmentally-friendly decisions when I view myself with positive and good intentions.	4.0204	0.7862	3.8158	0.8280
	SC2: Purchasing sustainably produced clothing makes me feel good knowing that the garments have been made in a way that is mindful of the many environmental issues the fashion industry touches upon.	4.5102	0.6923	4.1974	0.8947
	SC3: I prefer to purchase clothing that portrays my beliefs and ideals.	4.1837	0.8537	4.0789	0.9347
Brand Image	BI1: I like to purchase from companies that improve/enhance their brand image, with sustainable practices.	4.0204	0.9304	3.7763	0.8262
	BI2: I prefer to purchase clothing from brands with the same beliefs as I do.	4.0306	0.9892	3.7632	0.9362
	BI3: I do not have the purchase intention when I feel negatively about a brand. And vice versa.	3.9592	1.0738	4.1184	0.9376
Price	P1: I prefer to purchase affordable clothing.	4.3367	0.7988	3.8026	0.8644
	P2: I avoid purchasing overly priced clothing.	3.9694	1.0789	3.5658	1.0499
	P3_REV: I like purchasing overly priced clothing because I believe it has more value and is high quality (Reversed)	3.7143	1.0454	3.1184	1.1191
Purchase Intention	PI1: I am very interested in supporting sustainable clothing.	4.5000	0.6462	4.1184	0.9517
	PI2: In the future, I will purchase sustainable clothing with less environmental impact.	4.3163	0.7812	3.9868	0.8868
	PI3: I would advice others to buy and use sustainably produced clothing.	4.2041	0.8847	3.9211	1.0553
	PI4: I am very likely to buy sustainable clothing in the future.	4.3061	0.8423	4.1447	0.8279

4. Discussion

The impact of quality, self-concept, brand image, and price on sustainable clothing purchase intention by males and females was analyzed through partial least squares equation modelling with SmartPLS (v4.1.0.6) [127]. The consistent PLS-SEM algorithm, permutation test and bootstrap multi group analysis (MGA) were employed to rigorously assess potential differences between males and female groups. The measurement and structural models were evaluated separately for each gender group to mitigate the risk of heterogeneity, which can arise when gender differences are not adequately accounted for [32].

4.1. Common Method Bias

To assess the potential impact of common method bias, full-collinearity tests were conducted, following the procedures outlined by Kock [128] and Kock and Lynn [129]. This involved regressing the study's constructs against a randomly generated dummy variable, a method designed to detect any artificial covariance that could compromise the validity of the results. As presented in Table 3, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all constructs were found to be below the critical threshold of 3.3. These results indicate that common method bias does not pose a threat to validity of the study's findings.

Table 3.
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values.

Construct	VIF (Female)	VIF (Male)
Quality (Q)	1.120	1.082
Self Concept (SC)	1.096	1.941
Brand Image (BI)	1.210	1.350
Price (P)	1.028	1.141
Purchase Intention (PI)	1.318	2.182

4.2. Measurement Model

Prior to further analysis, the measurement model for both male and female consumer groups was rigorously evaluated to ensure its reliability and validity. The measurement model adhered to established criteria, including both reliability and validity measures [120, 130]. As shown in Table 4, the factor loadings for the items related to the constructs of Brand Image, Prices, Quality, and Self-concept generally exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7. Exceptions included Q1-Male, P1-Female, and P3_REV-Male, which, although slightly below 0.7, were retained as their loadings were greater than or equal to 0.4, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the associated constructs exceeded 0.5 [131]. However, items Q2, BI3, and P2 were removed due to loadings below 0.4, which caused the AVE to fall below 0.6. This decision aligns with the guideline that suggests researchers should avoid deleting more than 20% of indicators within a model [118]. The Composite reliability (CR) analysis confirmed the reliability of the constructs with values falling within the recommended range of 0.7 and 0.95. Additionally, convergent validity, as indicated by AVE values greater than 0.5 for all constructs, was achieved [118, 120]. Discriminant validity was established as shown in Table 5, with Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) values below 0.9, except for PI-SC (male) with HTMT of 0.9070. This confirms the distinctiveness of the constructs [132].

Table 4.
Measurement Model Results.

Construct	Item	Loading		Cronbach alpha		CR (rho-c)		AVE	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Quality	Q1	0.9554	0.6729	0.8037	0.3708	0.9049	0.7531	0.8267	0.6079
	Q3	0.8607	0.8735						
Self-Concept	SC1	0.7008	0.7637	0.6518	0.6885	0.8066	0.8286	0.5830	0.6188
	SC2	0.8350	0.8742						
	SC3	0.7487	0.7134						
Brand Image	BI1	0.8971	0.9230	0.7175	0.6961	0.8008	0.7953	0.7792	0.7607
	BI2	0.8681	0.8182						
Price	P1	0.4448	0.8590	0.4337	0.2586	0.7092	0.7215	0.5828	0.5698
	P3_REV	0.9838	0.6339						
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.8409	0.9016	0.8835	0.8885	0.9205	0.9229	0.7442	0.7496
	PI2	0.9147	0.8663						
	PI3	0.7689	0.8463						
	PI4	0.9174	0.8478						

Table 5.
Discriminant Validity.

Construct	Female					Male				
	Q	SC	BI	P	PI	Q	SC	BI	P	PI
Quality										
Self-Concept	0.4889					0.5741				
Brand Image	0.4197	0.8393				0.3105	0.7902			
Price	0.2158	0.4885	0.2331			0.5281	0.2551	0.4038		
Purchase Intention	0.4293	0.7838	0.6863	0.1773		0.2509	0.9070	0.6818	0.5733	

Note: Q=Quality, SC=Self Concept, BI=Brand Image, P=Price, PI=Purchase Intention.

4.3. Structural Model

The male and female models are saturated models with no free paths, thus the saturated and estimate model fit values are identical. The SRMR value was 0.0868 for the female structural model and 0.0988 for the male structural model (>0.08). The NFI-statistics for the female and male models are 0.6869 and 0.5866 (<0.09). However, this may have been affected by the small sample sizes for the female and male groups [133]. This shows that there is the data is moderately fitted to the model.

To compare the path coefficients between the models for male and female consumers, a bootstrap MGA test was performed, following the recommendations of Henseler et al. [134]. This approach was crucial to ensure that any observed differences in the group-specific PLS-SEM were not attributable to variations in the measurement constructs themselves. Measurement invariance was assessed using three criteria: configurational invariance, compositional invariance, and equality of composite mean values and variances [132].

Table 6.
Bootstrap Multigroup Analysis.

Constructs	Configurational Invariance (Same Algorithms for Both Groups)	C=1	>5%	Partial measurement invariance established	Equal Mean Assessment			Equal Variance Assessment			Full Measurement Invariance Established?
					Diff	CI	Equal	Diff	CI	Equal	
Q	Yes	0.9642	0.8629	Yes	-0.2373	[-0.2501, 0.2615]	Yes	0.6776	[-0.3455, 0.3675]	No	No
SC	Yes	0.9975	0.9814	Yes	0.3427	[-0.2577, 0.2605]	No	-0.361	[-0.4747, 0.49]	Yes	Yes
BI	Yes	0.9972	0.9868	Yes	0.3110	[-0.2459, 0.2506]	No	0.2019	[-0.4126, 0.4227]	Yes	Yes
P	Yes	0.8169	0.0963	Yes	0.7046	[-0.2524, 0.2597]	No	-0.0762	[-0.4054, 0.441]	Yes	Yes
PI	Yes	0.9991	0.9980	Yes	0.3933	[-0.2519, 0.2451]	No	-0.3466	[-0.353, 0.3739]	Yes	Yes

Note: Q=Quality, SC=Self Concept, BI=Brand Image, P=Price, PI=Purchase Intention.

Table 7.
Multigroup Analysis (Hypothesis Testing).

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient		Bias-corrected CI		Path Coefficient Diff	MGA	p-value diff (One-tailed)		
	Female	Male	Female	Male			Parametric test	Welch-Satterthwaite test	Supported
H1: Q → PI	0.1483	-0.0103	[0.0263, 0.3068]	[-0.1798, 0.0996]	0.1586	0.0892	0.0956	0.0913	No/No/No
H2: SC → PI	0.4065	0.5557	[0.223, 0.5555]	[0.3567, 0.7121]	-0.1492	0.1595	0.1606	0.1589	No/No/No
H3: BI → PI	0.2596	0.2547	[0.1092, 0.414]	[0.0954, 0.4254]	0.0049	0.4806	0.4858	0.4858	No/No/No
H4: P → PI	-0.0154	0.2296	[-0.1605, 0.1734]	[0.0695, 0.3747]	-0.245	0.0403	0.0431	0.0398	Yes/Yes/Yes

Note: Q=Quality, SC=Self Concept, BI=Brand Image, P=Price, PI=Purchase Intention.

To achieve configurational invariance, the measurement models for male and female consumers were constructed with identical indicators, data treatment, and optimization criteria. Compositional invariance was then confirmed by demonstrating that the correlations between the constructs were equal to 1 within the 5 percent quantile, as detailed in Table 6. While full measurement invariance was achieved for most constructs, partial invariance was identified for the Quality construct, as its mean and variance values differed significantly between the two groups. These findings justified the need for separate analyses of the male and female groups using MGA to explore the differences in standardized path coefficients.

Before conducting MGA, the minimum sample size for each gender group was determined through a priori power using G*power software. The analysis, with settings of an effect size of 0.15 (medium), alpha of 0.05, four predictors, and power of 0.8, indicated a minimum of 43 samples per group. The actual sample sizes in this study (Females=98, Males=76) exceeded this requirement, confirming the adequacy of the sample size for MGA.

The complete MGA analysis, comprising Hensler's MGA, the parametric test, and the Welch-Satterthwaite test [135], is presented in Table 7. The results consistently indicate no support for H1, as there are no differences between the genders regarding the relationship between Quality and Purchase Intention. Specifically, Quality had a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention for females (CI: 0.0263, 0.3068) but not for males (CI: -0.1798, 0.0996). Similarly, H2 was not supported, with Self-Concept significantly and positively influencing Purchase Intention for both females (CI: 0.223, 0.5555) and males (CI: 0.3567, 0.7121). Furthermore, H3 was also not supported, as no significant differences were detected in the impact of Brand Image on Purchase Intention between females and males, with both genders showing a significant positive relationship (CI: 0.1092, 0.414) and males (CI: 0.0954, 0.425). Finally, the analysis revealed a significant difference in the effect of Price on Purchase Intention, with Price having no significant impact on females (CI: -0.1605, 0.173) but a significant positive effect on males (CI: 0.0695, 0.3747).

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that there are positive and significant relationships between brand image and purchase intention, as well as between self-concept and purchase intention. All four predictor constructs have a collectively moderate effect on the outcome construct. The self-concept construct's impact on purchase intention has a large effect size, while brand image's impact on purchase intention has a small effect size.

Moreover, this study also provides insights into the role of quality, self-concept, brand image, and price in influencing the intention to purchase sustainable clothing for male and female customers. The findings of this study show that the effect of brand image on the intention to purchase sustainable clothing does not vary significantly between male and female customers. However, brand image has a significant impact on both male and female customers' decisions to purchase sustainable clothing. The results of this study are supported by past studies [113, 136], where both male and female customers tend to exhibit similar tendencies to buy clothing from recognizable brands. In other words, customers tend to purchase clothing from reputable brands that they are familiar with and which provide them favorable outcomes as well as satisfaction [112], regardless of gender. This study's outcome is also consistent with past studies [25, 137], which found that all customers, especially females, tend to exhibit sustainable purchasing behavior and thus are more likely to purchase from brands or companies that participate in sustainable initiatives and corporate social responsibility programs.

The relationship between price and purchase intention is not significantly different between male and female customers. Nevertheless, the relationship is significant for male customers, but not for female customers. Surprisingly, male customers are more likely to be influenced by the prices of sustainable clothing, whereas females are not influenced by the price. This is consistent with Rahman et al. [56], which revealed that male customers are willing to spend more to purchase sustainable clothing than female customers. One possible explanation is that male customers are more likely to shop quickly and refuse to spend much time on shopping [108]. Hence, product price becomes the dominant factor for men when they are making a purchase decision, with the sustainable nature of the purchased product taking a backseat. In contrast, female customers who have more positive green consumption in general tend to focus more on the environmental aspects and thus neglect pricing [137, 138]. Another reason that leads to female customers not being affected by the price possibly that they are more fashion conscious [108] and are more likely to participate in impulse purchases based on sensory cues, rather than the product price.

In addition, the results from this study indicate that quality has no significant influence on purchase intention for both male and female customers. This shows that customers do not consider the quality of clothes when making a purchase decision, regardless of gender. In other words, both male and female customers do not consider the quality of sustainable clothing when making a purchase decision. The result is not consistent with Rahman et al. [56] study, where quality is found to play a significant role in clothing evaluation and purchasing, regardless of gender. This outcome is also in contradiction with the past studies [108, 139], which stated that female customers tend to consider the product quality when they shop, as compared to male customers. One possible explanation for the result of this study is that it is difficult to evaluate the quality of sustainable clothing at the point of purchase [57]. Therefore, quality is not the main factors influencing customers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing for both male and female customers.

Although multigroup analysis revealed that there is no significant difference in the relationship between self-concept and purchase intention between male and female customers, self-concept has an effect on purchase intention for both the male and female customers. The results indicate that self-concept affects the customers' decision to purchase sustainable clothing, regardless of the gender. This study's outcome also contradicts other studies [108, 111] which revealed that both female and male customers are getting more interested in clothing and care about their appearances in the new millennia, and thus they tend to select clothing that would reflect and enhance their social appeal. The result also consistent with Tung, et al. [110] which found out that female customers tend to use clothing to express self-identity and have higher intention to purchase environmentally friendly clothing.

6. Conclusion

The results revealed that customers are affected by factors such as brand image and self-concept when they are deciding whether to purchase sustainable clothing. Multigroup analysis revealed that brand image and self-concept have a significant influence on both male and female customers' decisions regarding the purchase of sustainable clothing. However, price plays a more important role for male customers when deciding whether to purchase sustainable clothing compared to female customers. Surprisingly, both male and female customers do not consider quality to be an important factor when purchasing sustainable clothing. The findings provide valuable information to businesses in the fashion industry, especially for those interested in the sustainable clothing sector. Businesses should emphasize and focus more on brand image and self-concept, as these two factors play vital roles in influencing customers' intentions to purchase sustainable clothing.

As sustainable clothing gains popularity and consumers become more aware of the negative impact of fast fashion, regardless of gender, businesses and stakeholders now have the opportunity to make better fashion choices while acting ecologically friendly. Clothing businesses nowadays feel obligated to participate in socially responsible behaviors and produce eco-friendly clothes to satisfy their stakeholders' expectations and gain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, businesses that are concerned about the requirements of their stakeholders generally perform better than those that are not [140]. For that reason, clothing businesses that engage in producing sustainable clothing tend to display greater value and provide consumers with a stronger appraisal of the brand, which leads to favorable brand interactions and contributes to an increased intention to purchase the clothing [141].

In terms of research limitations, this study carried out data collection online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, including additional variables such as cultural differences and economic status could provide a better understanding of purchase intention towards sustainable clothing; thus, future research should consider incorporating these variables to explore the impact and relationships more thoroughly. This study also focuses on the general population and sustainable clothing in general, instead of specific types of sustainable clothing or regional comparisons. Therefore, future researchers could employ different methodologies to better examine how the factors influence customers' intention to purchase sustainable clothing. For instance, differences in purchase intentions among consumers from different age groups, regions, and different types of customers (i.e., customers who used to purchase sustainable goods and those who have never purchased sustainable goods) could be further examined.

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