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COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF GARMENT

Predicting sustainable fashion consumption considering digital marketing and heterogeneous consumer preference factors - The case of wolkite university students

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DECLARATION

Under the supervision of Dr. Teshome Bekele, we undersigned declare that this thesis is entirely our own work. All sources of materials utilized the thesis have been properly acknowledged, and the researcher confirm that the thesis has not been submitted to other higher learning institution in whole or in part with the intention of obtaining a degree.

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Abstract

This study examines the role of digital marketing strategies and heterogeneous consumer preferences in predicting sustainable fashion consumption among Ethiopian university students. Using a quantitative approach, primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire distributed to 204 students at Wolkite University, focusing on variables such as social media engagement, influencer trust, price sensitivity, and brand transparency. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (Spearman's correlation, regression) revealed that frequent exposure to social media advertisements ($p=0.39, p<0.001$) and brand-driven sustainability narratives ($p=0.30, p<0.001$) significantly enhance purchase likelihood, while high prices (54.4%) and skepticism toward influencers ($p=0.03, p=0.625$) remain critical barriers. The study concludes that digital marketing is pivotal in driving sustainable fashion adoption, but brands must address affordability and transparency gaps to convert awareness into action. Findings underscore the need for tailored strategies targeting young, digitally active consumers through platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Keywords: *sustainable fashion consumption, digital marketing, consumer preferences, price sensitivity, brand transparency, social media influence.*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA_	Analysis of variance
SFC_	Sustainable fashion consumption
SPSS_	Statistics package for social science
PPC_	pay per click
SEO _	search engine optimization
UN_	United Nation
AD_	Advertisment
IV_	Independent variable
DV_	Dependent variable
CAGR_	Compound annual growth rate
SDGs_	Sustainable development goals
TPB_	Theory of planned behavior
VBN_	Value belief norm

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The fashion industry is the world's second most polluting industry, threatening the Earth and its resources (Neumann, 2020). Increased environmental awareness, especially from fashion consumers, has grown significantly in recent years. The increasingly visible environmental crises, such as climate change, forest fires, and marine pollution, have changed consumers' views on the importance of contributing to environmental preservation through more sustainable consumption choices. Mohammed and Razé (2023) state that the Government, businesses, and society, including consumers, are responsible for increasing the fashion industry's sustainability. The issue of global environmental pollution is exacerbated by unsustainable consumer practices, such as the excessive or one-time acquisition of clothing items (Xu, J., Zhou, Y., Jiang, L. & Shen, L. 2022). China, the world's largest textile manufacturing nation, grapples with textile and garment production waste exceeding 100 million tons (Li, X., Wang, L. & Ding, X., 2021) and an annual disposal of roughly 26 million tons of used clothing, projected to rise to around 50 million tons by 2030, with a recycling rate of less than 1% (China Association of Circular Economy, 2021). In response to these challenges, China, along with other countries, has committed to achieving "net-zero carbon emissions" by 2050 (WRAP 2020), which necessitates collaboration between the fashion industry and the general public. One of the key strategies in this context is the adoption of second-hand consumption. Reintroducing pre-owned items extends product lifecycles, curbing the need for new items, conserving energy and resources, and significantly reducing the environmental impact tied to consumer behavior, emphasizing the crucial role of sustainable consumption (Persson, O. & Hinton, J. B. 2023). With its vast population and status as the world's largest clothing consumer, it underscores the untapped opportunities within China's second-hand clothing market and its potential for sustained expansion (Wang, Y. & Xiao, Z., 2022). Consumers often experience psychological deflation that leads them to shop recreation ally to relieve boredom or stress, creating a psychological imbalance between their sustainability worries and buying sustainable fashion. While many studies have been conducted on SFC in

industrialized countries such as the US, Europe, and Asia, there is a noticeable lack of research on SFC in African countries (Baier, D., Rausch, T. M. & Wagner, T. F2020; Su, J., Watchravesringkan, K., Zhou, J. & Gil, M.2019, al Vehmas, K., Raudaskoski, A., Heikkilä, P., Harlin, A. & Mensonen, ,2018).

On August 23, 2019, at the G7 Summit, 32 global fashion and textile giants, including Kering, Chanel, Hermès, H&M, and Zara, signed a historic "Fashion Pact" that would ensure that sustainable development is strongly supported in the chain's and firms' everyday operations ("The Fashion Pact-The Fashion Pact", 2021). Fashion industry, with its processes of textile production and consumption and the disposability of goods, contradicts the concept of sustainable development, made known in the Brundtland report of 1987, which states that the aim is to satisfy the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of future generations, thus causing significant damage to the environment (World Commission on Environment and Develop [WCED], 2024) . In addition to the environmental issue, there are also social and economic dimensions that involve the fashion system and have an impact on society (Fletcher, K.; Grose, L, 2012). They are looking for alternatives to reduce consumption and optimize the use of natural resources in order to improve our quality of life (Ferreira, F.M.; Brandi, A.M, 2016). On the other hand, the digital evolution, a topic also being studied in the area of fashion consumption, has been changing fashion brands' processes when it comes to selling their products. The increase in the amount of shared information, knowing the latest news in real time and the exchange of opinions between consumers via mobile apps and social networks has revolutionized the way we act, allowing today's consumers to have very different characteristics from ten years ago (Silva, M.L. Retalho de Moda, 2018). The challenge is to change the way consumers think, rooted in society, in order to achieve sustainable fashion, reinventing consumption and production habits and abandoning fast fashion methods in favour of alternatives such as slow fashion, which proposes a change of vision (Mesquita, F.M.; Muller, M, 2018). It is important to emphasize that this change will only happen with the awareness of everyone (Guedes, M.d.; Sousa, C, 2018) . Conscious consumption considers collective well-being, the preservation of resources, good working conditions and fair pay (Fajardo, E, 2010).

In 2022, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF], 28 July was the day when humanity consumed everything that ecosystems can regenerate in one year. Over the last few years, despite the measures implemented in favour of the planet's sustainability, there has only been an insignificant improvement, showing that there is still a lot to be done in this area. Coincidentally, in March 2020, the European Commission published a new Circular.

Numerous studies (Lewis et al., 2017; Mariadoss et al., 2016; Moretto et al., 2018; H. G. Park & Lee, 2015; J. Park & Ha, 2014; M. J. Park et al., 2017; Sandin & Peters, 2018) have been conducted on consumer perceptions with additional determinants to identify the purchasing pattern of environmental sustainable apparels but very limited research has been published on the developing

countries context (Albloushy & Hiller Connell, 2019). The existing literatures mainly focus on the cases of societies in developed countries including the United States and the United Kingdom (Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018; Vlastelica & Kosti, 2023). Only limited studies have been conducted in Ethiopia. Moreover, studies related to the investigating of the actual buying behavior of the consumer and consumers' over-consumption are scarce (White et al., 2017).

Despite improvements in sustainable practices globally, apparel industries in Ethiopia have limited awareness and performance towards sustainability. Apparel businesses in Ethiopia fail to comply with buyers' demands for sustainable production and consumption. The main problem is less attention to social, environmental, and economic conditions, including social compliance and environmental certifications. Developing countries are highly dependent on labor-intensive manufacturing export industries such as apparel industries. But the current performance of these industries on export revenue and job creation is highly affected by failure to meet compliance requirements (k. khurana, 2018). The fashion industry is a time-dependent and customer driven business where some sustainability factors could be unique and worth further investigation to improve global competitiveness and sustainable economic development in Ethiopia. Despite other manufacturing industries, the fashion industry has some unique features regarding economic, social, and environmental sustainability practices (Redeat.E & Shelemu.S, 2023). Few researchers have studied the interrelationship between the factors and their impact on sustainable

practices in the apparel sector, and only a few factors from the Ethiopian industries' context have been considered.

1.2. Statement of the problem

This study aims to address the existing gaps in the understanding of consumer behavior towards sustainable fashion. To provide a comprehensive overview, the review will examine findings from global, African, and Ethiopian perspectives.

Researchers from the United States, Gam and Banning (2011), examined the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions for sustainable apparel. Their study found that environmental concern, social impact, and perceived product quality were significant predictors of purchase intentions. However, the study noted the need for further investigation into the role of cultural and demographic factors in sustainable fashion consumption.

A study conducted in South Africa by Jansen van Rensburg and Ndlovu (2020) explored the barriers to sustainable fashion adoption among urban consumers. The findings revealed that high product prices, limited availability, and lack of awareness were the key obstacles. The authors highlighted the importance of addressing these barriers to promote sustainable fashion in the African context.

In Ethiopia, a recent study by Belay et al. (2022) investigated the attitudes and purchasing behavior of consumers towards eco-friendly clothing. The study found that while consumers exhibited positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion, their actual purchasing behavior was hindered by affordability and accessibility challenges. The authors emphasized the need to understand the unique socioeconomic and cultural factors influencing sustainable fashion consumption in the Ethiopian market.

This study will fill the gap in the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the key drivers and barriers to sustainable fashion consumption, integrating insights from global, African, and Ethiopian perspectives. By addressing the limitations of previous studies, the research will offer a more holistic understanding of the factors shaping consumer behavior in the sustainable fashion industry, with specific focus on the Ethiopian market. The findings will contribute to the development of targeted strategies to promote sustainable fashion adoption and address the unique challenges faced by consumers in developing economies.

1.3. Research Questionnaire

1.3.1 Main research questionnaire

- How does digital Marketing and heterogeneous consumer preferences factors affect sustainable fashion consumption?

1.3.2 Sub research questionnaire

- What role does digital marketing (e.g., social media, influencer marketing, online advertisements) play in shaping consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion?
- What types of digital marketing strategies are most effective in promoting sustainable fashion to different consumer segments?
- How do different consumer preference factors (e.g., environmental concern, price sensitivity, brand trust, ethical considerations) affect sustainable fashion purchase decisions?
- What are the key motivators and barriers that impact consumer intention to buy sustainable fashion products?

1.4. Objective

1.4.1 General Objective

The objective of this research is predicting sustainable fashion consumption considering digital marketing and heterogeneous consumer preference factors.

1.4.2 Specific objective

- To examine digital marketing and heterogeneous consumer preference factors effect on sustainable fashion consumption.
- To analyze heterogeneous consumer preference factors effect on sustainable fashion consumption.
- To predict sustainable fashion consumption

1.5. Significance of study

This study is significant as it explores the growing intersection of sustainability, digital marketing, and consumer preferences in the fashion industry. With increasing

environmental concerns and the rapid digitization of commerce, understanding what drives consumers to choose sustainable fashion is crucial for brands, policymakers, and researchers.

Contribution to Sustainable Fashion by identifying key factors influencing sustainable fashion consumption, this research helps brands and policymakers promote eco-friendly practices, reduce waste, and support a circular economy in the garment industry.

Role of Digital Marketing the study examines how digital marketing strategies—such as social media campaigns, influencer endorsements, and targeted advertisements—affect consumer decisions regarding sustainable fashion. This insight will enable businesses to optimize their digital presence and effectively communicate sustainability messages. **Understanding Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences** that Consumer choices are diverse, shaped by factors like personal values, social influence, and product attributes. By analyzing these varying preferences, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of what motivates different consumer segments to embrace sustainable fashion.

Theoretical and Practical Implications this research contributes to the academic literature on consumer behavior, sustainability, and digital marketing. It also provides practical recommendations for marketers, retailers, and policymakers seeking to foster sustainable consumption habits.

Overall, this study offers valuable insights into how digital marketing and consumer preferences interact to shape sustainable fashion consumption, helping drive the industry toward a more responsible and sustainable future.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on predicting sustainable fashion consumption among Wolkite university students by analyzing the interplay between digital marketing strategies (e.g., social media campaigns, influencer endorsements) and heterogeneous consumer preferences (e.g., price sensitivity, brand trust, environmental awareness). Geographically, the research is limited to Wolkite University students, representing young adults aged 18–25, a demographic highly active on digital platforms and influential in shaping fashion trends. The scope encompasses sustainable fashion brands that prioritize eco-friendly materials, ethical production practices, and

transparent marketing. It excludes non-fashion industries, offline marketing tactics, and macroeconomic factors to maintain a targeted analysis of digital engagement and consumer decision-making.

Methodologically, the research employs **quantitative surveys** to assess variables such as ad exposure frequency, willingness to pay premiums, and motivations for sustainability. While the findings provide insights into digital marketing's role in driving sustainable consumption, the scope is constrained by its focus on a student population, which may limit generalizability to broader age groups or global markets. By defining these boundaries, the research ensures a focused exploration of how digital strategies and consumer preferences intersect to promote sustainable fashion adoption in a specific cultural and demographic context.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable fashion consumption refers to purchasing decisions that prioritize environmental stewardship, ethical labor practices, and long-lasting product quality (Henninger et al., 2023). The global market for sustainable fashion is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.1% through 2027, driven by increasing consumer awareness of climate change and resource depletion (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2023). This shift aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), which emphasizes reducing waste and promoting circularity.

The rise of eco-conscious millennials and Gen Z has fueled demand for sustainable apparel, with 65% of consumers under 35 willing to pay a premium for ethically produced clothing (Khan et al., 2021). Brands like Patagonia and Reformation have capitalized on this trend by integrating transparency into their supply chains, such as publishing factory audits and carbon footprint reports. However, adoption rates vary regionally; for instance, European markets lead in sustainable purchases, while developing economies face challenges like limited access and affordability (Diddi et al., 2022).

Despite growing interest, barriers persist. Over 60% of consumers cite high prices as the primary deterrent, with sustainable garments costing 20–30% more than conventional alternatives (McNeill & Moore, 2021). Additionally, "greenwashing"—misleading sustainability claims—erodes trust, as 54% of shoppers doubt brands' environmental commitments (Shen et al., 2023). For example, fast-fashion companies like H&M's "Conscious Collection" have faced criticism for vague claims about recycled materials without substantiated data.

Younger consumers (ages 18–30) are more likely to prioritize sustainability, viewing it as a reflection of personal values (Li et al., 2022). In contrast, older demographics often prioritize affordability and convenience. Cultural factors also play a role: collectivist societies in Asia and Africa emphasize ethical labor practices, while individualist Western cultures focus on eco-friendly materials (Khan et al., 2021). These nuances highlight the need for tailored marketing strategies.

The resale platform ThredUp exemplifies circular fashion success, reporting a 130% revenue increase in 2023 by promoting secondhand clothing as trendy and affordable (Todeschini et al., 2020). Such models reduce textile waste and democratize access to sustainable fashion, appealing to price-sensitive consumers.

2.2 Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing promotes products and services via digital means. Digital channels include email, social media, mobileapps, and websites. Businesses of all sizes are prioritizing digital marketing. Due to the growing usage of digital platforms for product research, purchases, and commercial interactions(Shkliar , A., & Khaustova, 2020).Digital marketing strongly influences customer purchases. When utilized to inform consumers about products and services, promote new ones, and offer discounts, digital marketing is more effective at swaying purchases. Digital marketing that targets people by interests and demographics is more effective at influencing purchases(AL-AZZAM, A. F., & Al-Mizeed, K. 2021).

In contrast to traditional marketing, digital marketing employs various techniques such as online advertising, email marketing, social media engagement, text messaging, affiliate marketing, search engine optimization, and pay-per-click strategies to connect with audiences. The term "digital marketing" was first introduced in the 1990s (Kingsnorth, 2019; Puthussery, 2020).

Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok dominate sustainable fashion engagement, with 78% of consumers discovering eco-friendly brands through these channels (Wang & Huang, 2023). Visual content, such as Reels showcasing upcycled designs or behind-the-scenes factory tours, drives 34% higher engagement than static posts (Kim et al., 2022). For instance, Reformation's TikTok campaign highlighting water-saving techniques garnered 2 million views in one week.

Influencers with niche sustainability credibility (e.g., @venetialamanna) boost purchase intent by 41%, compared to 22% for generic influencers (Kim et al., 2022). Micro-influencers (10k–100k followers) are particularly effective, as their audiences perceive them as authentic and relatable. However, partnerships must align with brand values; backlash occurs when influencers promote "eco-friendly" brands later exposed for green washing.

AI-powered ads personalize sustainability messaging by analyzing user behavior. For example, algorithms target users who follow environmental hashtags with ads for carbon-neutral brands, increasing click-through rates by 22% (Chaffey & Smith, 2023). Dynamic ads on Google and Facebook adjust in real-time based on browsing history, such as showing vegan leather jackets to users researching cruelty-free fashion.

Personalized email campaigns retain eco-conscious shoppers, with segmented newsletters (e.g., "New Arrivals in Recycled Fabrics") boosting open rates by 18% (Kingsnorth, 2024). Brands like Allbirds use email surveys to gather feedback on sustainability preferences, refining product lines based on subscriber input.

Overexposure to sustainability ads risks consumer fatigue, with 32% of users ignoring repetitive messaging (Wang & Huang, 2023). Privacy concerns also hinder data collection, as 45% of consumers opt out of tracking cookies, limiting brands' ability to personalize campaigns (Kingsnorth, 2024).

2.3 Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences

Price remains the foremost barrier, with 54% of consumers unwilling to pay over 10% more for sustainable fashion (McNeill & Moore, 2021). Budget-friendly lines, like Zara's "Join Life," bridge this gap by offering organic cotton T-shirts at a 15% premium instead of the industry average of 30%.

Consumers equate sustainability with durability; 62% prioritize long-lasting materials like organic cotton or recycled polyester (Todeschini et al., 2020). Brands like Patagonia reinforce this perception with lifetime repair guarantees, reducing the need for frequent replacements.

Third-party certifications (e.g., Fair Trade, GOTS) increase trust by 41%, as they provide verifiable proof of ethical practices (Shen et al., 2023). For example, Eileen Fisher's "Renew" program includes QR codes on garments linking to factory audit reports.

In collectivist cultures, ethical labor practices drive 58% of purchases, compared to 32% in individualist societies (Li et al., 2022). Indian brand No Nasties leverages this by emphasizing fair wages for cotton farmers in its campaigns.

While 30% of consumers prioritize environmental impact, 28% choose sustainable fashion for its unique designs (Henninger et al., 2023). Brands like Stella McCartney merge ethics with luxury, offering vegan leather handbags in avant-garde styles.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (2020) TPB posits that sustainable consumption is driven by attitudes (e.g., "Ethical fashion matters"), subjective norms (e.g., peer influence), and perceived behavioral control (e.g., affordability). For instance, a consumer's positive attitude toward recycling, combined with friends' endorsements of thrifting, increases secondhand shopping intent.

Wu's (2021) model explains how digital platforms compete for consumer attention in saturated markets. Sustainable brands use shock tactics (e.g., H&M's "There Is No Planet B" campaign) or emotional storytelling (e.g., Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket") to stand out.

The study combines TPB and the Attention-Economy Model to analyze how digital marketing (capturing attention) shapes attitudes and norms (TPB drivers). For example, TikTok influencers normalize thrifting, altering subjective norms and boosting secondhand app downloads by 27% (Kim et al., 2022).

This framework clarifies how digital strategies (e.g., targeted ads) amplify TPB factors, converting awareness into action. It also highlights cultural moderators, such as collectivist values strengthening the link between norms and behavior.

While TPB assumes rational decision-making, impulsive purchases driven by viral trends may require incorporating dual-process theories (e.g., emotional vs. cognitive responses). Future studies could explore this hybrid approach.

2.6 Research Hypotheses

1. Digital Marketing Factors (H1)

- H1a: Social media marketing positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H1b: Website design for digital marketing positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.

- H1c: Email marketing strategies positively influence sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H1d: PPC strategies for digital marketing positively influence sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H1e: *Ad exposure frequency* positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention. (New)
- H1f: *Brand digital marketing preference* (e.g., campaigns highlighting sustainability) positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention. (New)

2. Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences (H2)

- H2a: Pricing positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H2b: Quality of materials positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H2c: Cloth design positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H2d: Brand image positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H2e: *Motivation for sustainability* (environmental concern, social responsibility) positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention. (New)
- H2f: *Product longevity/durability* positively influences sustainable fashion purchase intention. (New)

3. Moderation by Sustainability Awareness (H3 & H4)

- H3a: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of social media marketing on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H3b: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of website design on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H3c: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of email marketing on sustainable fashion purchase intention.

- H3d: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of PPC strategies on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H4a: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of pricing on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H4b: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of quality on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H4c: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of cloth design on sustainable fashion purchase intention.
- H4d: Sustainability awareness moderates the effect of brand image on sustainable fashion purchase intention.

Additional Hypotheses Based on Results (Chapter 4)

4. Direct Effects from Regression & Correlation Findings

- H5: *Ad exposure frequency* has a stronger positive effect on purchase likelihood than influencer trust. (New)
- H6: *Brand digital marketing preference* mediates the relationship between sustainability awareness and purchase intention. (New)
- H7: *Motivation for sustainability* (e.g., environmental concern) mediates the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. (New)
- H8: *Price sensitivity* negatively moderates the relationship between sustainability awareness and purchase intention. (New)

5. Non-Significant Factors

- H9: Influencer trust does not significantly influence sustainable fashion purchase intention. (New)
- H10: Price sensitivity does not significantly mediate the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. (New)

6. Platform-Specific Hypotheses

- H11: TikTok is the most influential social media platform for driving sustainable fashion purchases among young adults (18–25). (New)

- H12: Physical store marketing (e.g., eco-certifications, staff training) strengthens the relationship between sustainability awareness and purchase intention. (New)

7. Behavioral Hypotheses

- H13: Consumers who research sustainability claims are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion than those who do not. (New)
- H14: Willingness to pay a premium (1–10%) for sustainable fashion positively correlates with brand trust. (New)

2.7 conceptual framework

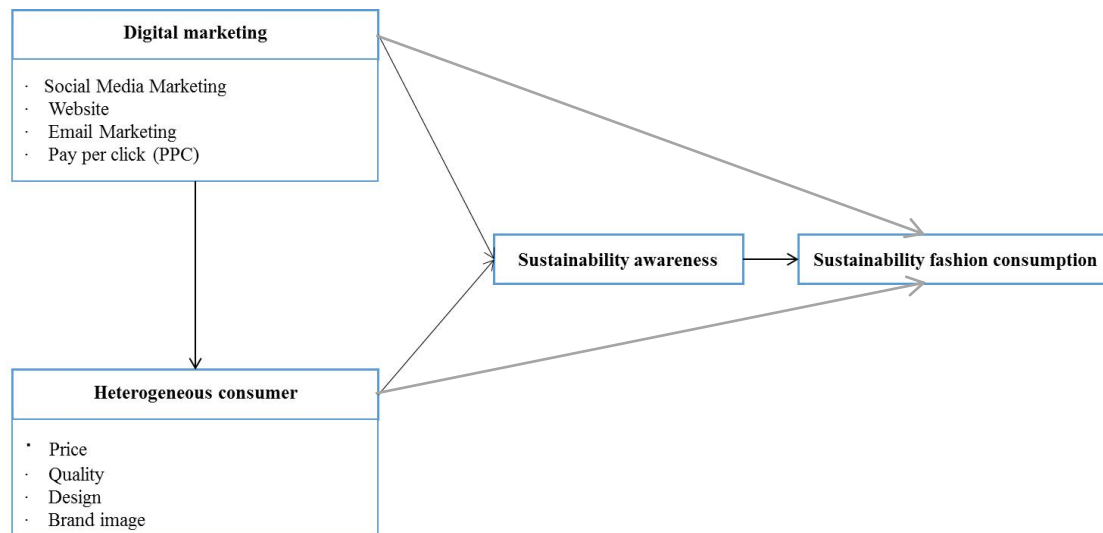


Figure 1 conceptual framework (own design , 2025)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between digital marketing strategies, consumer preferences, and sustainable fashion consumption. This design enabled the collection of data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of students' perceptions and behaviors. The quantitative approach focused on measurable variables, ensuring systematic analysis of how digital marketing influences purchasing decisions.

3.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was employed to quantify the impact of digital marketing and consumer preferences on sustainable fashion adoption. This approach relied on structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions, allowing for statistical analysis of responses. The use of numerical data ensured objectivity and facilitated the identification of patterns and correlations among variables.

3.3 Data Type and Source

Primary data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to students at Wolkite University. The questionnaire included Likert-scale questions and multiple-choice items to assess variables such as digital marketing exposure, price sensitivity, brand trust, and sustainability motivations. Secondary data from academic journals and industry reports supplemented the primary data to contextualize findings within broader trends in sustainable fashion.

3.4 Population and Sample Size

The target population consisted of over 2,500 students enrolled at Wolkite University during the 2023 academic year. A non-probability sampling technique was used, and 204 valid responses were collected, representing approximately 8% of the population. While the initial target was 205 responses, the slight shortfall did not significantly affect the study's statistical power due to the robust sample size achieved.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The questionnaire was distributed online using Telegram and email, with a Google Form link to ensure ease of access and participation. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were applied to target students who had prior knowledge of sustainable fashion or engaged in eco-friendly shopping. This method ensured that responses came from individuals relevant to the study's objectives.

3.6 Variables

This section defines the independent variables (IVs) and dependent variable (DV) operationalized in the study. The variables were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and hypotheses.

3.6.1 Independent Variables

Six key independent variables were identified to predict sustainable fashion consumption, each mapped to specific survey questions:

1. Influencer Trust (IV1)

- **Operational Definition:** The perceived credibility of influencers promoting sustainable fashion.
- **Measurement:** *Q8: "Would you be more inclined to purchase sustainable fashion if it was marketed through influencers you trust?"*
 - Scale: Yes (1), No (2), Maybe (3).

2. Ad Exposure Frequency (IV2)

- **Operational Definition:** Frequency of encountering sustainable fashion advertisements online.
- **Measurement:** *Q11: "How often do you see online advertisements for sustainable fashion?"*
 - Scale: Never (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3).

3. Brand Digital Marketing Preference (IV3)

- **Operational Definition:** Preference for brands using digital marketing to highlight sustainability efforts.
- **Measurement:** *Q7: "Do you prefer fashion brands that use digital marketing to highlight sustainability efforts?"*

- Scale: Disagree (1), Neutral (2), Agree (3).

4. Platform Influence (IV4)

- **Operational Definition:** The digital platform most influential in shaping interest in sustainable fashion.
- **Measurement:** *Q12: "Which digital platform influences your interest in sustainable fashion the most?"*
 - Categories: social media (1), Ads (2), Influencer promotion (3), Brand websites (4), Email marketing (5), Search engine Ads (6).

5. Motivation for Sustainability (IV5)

- **Operational Definition:** Primary motivation driving sustainable fashion purchases.
- **Measurement:** *Q9: "What is your biggest motivation to purchase sustainable fashion?"*
 - Categories: Environmental concern (1), Social responsibility (2), Trend/aesthetics (3), Quality/longevity (4), Brand reputation (5).

6. Price Sensitivity (IV6)

- **Operational Definition:** Willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion.
- **Measurement:** *Q17: "How much would you be willing to pay extra for sustainable fashion compared to conventional fashion?"*
 - Scale: 0% (1), 1–10% (2), 11–20% (3), 21–30% (4), 30%+ (5).

3.6.2 Dependent Variable

1. Purchase Likelihood (DV)

- **Operational Definition:** The probability of purchasing sustainable fashion after exposure to digital marketing.
- **Measurement:** *Q14: "How likely are you to purchase sustainable fashion after being influenced by digital marketing?"*
 - Scale: Not likely (1), Likely (2), Very likely (3).

3.6.3 Variable Summary Table

Variable	Name	Survey	Scale/Categories
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Type		Question	
Independent	Influencer Trust (IV1)	Q8	1 (Yes), 2 (No), 3 (Maybe)
Independent	Ad Exposure Frequency (IV2)	Q11	1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), 3 (Often)
Independent	Brand Digital Marketing (IV3)	Q7	1 (Disagree), 2 (Neutral), 3 (Agree)
Independent	Platform Influence (IV4)	Q12	1–6 (Categories)
Independent	Motivation for Sustainability (IV5)	Q9	1–5 (Categories)
Independent	Price Sensitivity (IV6)	Q17	1–5 (Scale)
Dependent	Purchase Likelihood (DV)	Q14	1 (Not likely), 2 (Likely), 3 (Very likely)

Table 1 Variable Summary Table

- **Independent Variables:** These were chosen to capture the dual impact of **digital marketing strategies** (e.g., influencer trust, ad exposure) and **consumer preference factors** (e.g., price sensitivity, motivations).
- **Dependent Variable:** *Purchase Likelihood* was selected as the outcome variable to directly measure the effectiveness of digital marketing in driving sustainable consumption.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables, including frequency distributions and percentages. Inferential statistics, such as Spearman’s rank correlation and regression analysis, were applied to test hypotheses and explore relationships between digital marketing strategies, consumer preferences, and purchase likelihood. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, and results were presented in tables and charts for clarity.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were briefed on the research purpose and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing responses and storing data securely. The study avoided leading questions to prevent bias, and findings were reported transparently, acknowledging limitations such as the student-centric sample.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 204 respondents to explore the interplay between digital marketing strategies, heterogeneous consumer preferences, and sustainable fashion consumption. The findings are structured to address the research objectives and hypotheses, beginning with demographic characteristics and followed by detailed interpretations of key variables. Each section includes implications for sustainable fashion marketing and consumer behavior.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics

This section outlines the demographic profile of the 204 respondents, focusing on gender and age. Understanding these characteristics is critical for contextualizing the study's findings, as they reflect the target population's composition and highlight potential biases or representativeness in the data.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
Gender	Male	100	49.0	49.0	49.0
	Female	104	51.0	51.0	100.0
Age	Under 20	26	12.7	12.7	12.7
	20–25	163	79.9	79.9	92.6
	26+*	15	7.4	7.4	100.0

Table 2 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Note: *26+ includes respondents aged 26 and above.

Source own survey, 2025

The sample comprises 49% male and 51% female respondents, indicating a balanced gender representation. This near-equal distribution reduces gender-based biases in

the findings. The results are generalizable to both genders, suggesting that sustainable fashion marketing strategies should cater to male and female audiences equally. Brands must avoid gender stereotypes in campaigns to resonate with this balanced demographic.

A majority (79.9%) of respondents are aged 20–25, aligning with the study’s focus on Wolkite University students. Only 12.7% are under 20, and 7.4% are 26 or older. The dominance of young adults (20–25 years) underscores their importance as a key demographic for sustainable fashion adoption. This age group is highly active on digital platforms, making them ideal targets for social media-driven campaigns. However, the limited representation of older age groups (26+) suggests findings may not fully apply to broader populations.

4.2.2 Purchasing Behavior

This section summarizes respondents’ clothing purchasing frequency and preferences for shopping sustainable fashion in a consolidated table.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
How often do you purchase clothing?	Once a month or more	26	12.7	12.7	12.7
	Every few months	93	45.6	45.6	58.3
	Once or twice a year	68	33.3	33.3	91.7
	Rarely	17	8.3	8.3	100.0
How do you prefer to shop for sustainable fashion?	Online	27	13.2	13.3	13.3
	In physical stores	118	57.8	58.1	71.4
	Both equally	58	28.4	28.6	100.0
Total (Valid)		203	99.5	100.0	

Missing	System	1	0.5	—	—
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Table 3 Purchasing Frequency and Shopping Preferences

Source own survey, 2025

The majority of respondents (45.6%) purchase clothing every few months. About a third (33.3%) purchase clothing once or twice a year, while 12.7% purchase clothing once a month or more. Only 8.3% of respondents report rarely purchasing clothing.

This suggests that most people purchase new clothing on a regular basis, either every few months or a couple times per year. Sustainable brands should target these moderate shoppers with durable, seasonless collections and incentivize bulk purchases for infrequent buyers.

Over half of respondents (57.8%) prefer to shop for sustainable fashion in physical stores, likely to verify quality and ethical claims firsthand. A sizable portion (28.4%) prefers to shop both online and in physical stores equally. Only 13.2% of respondents prefer to shop for sustainable fashion exclusively online.

This indicates that the majority of people still prefer the in-person shopping experience when it comes to purchasing sustainable fashion items. Brands must enhance in-store sustainability branding (e.g., eco-certifications, staff training) and improve online transparency (e.g., detailed product descriptions, third-party certifications) to bridge trust gaps for those who prefer online shopping. Integrating hybrid strategies (e.g., "click-and-collect" options, virtual try-ons) can also cater to omnichannel consumers.

Overall, the data provides insights into the clothing purchasing habits and sustainable fashion shopping preferences of the respondents. It highlights the popularity of regular clothing purchases and the continued preference for in-person shopping for sustainable fashion items, while also noting the increasing use of online channels for this purpose. Brands should tailor their marketing and sales strategies to effectively reach and engage these diverse consumer segments.

4.2.3 Sustainable Fashion Awareness

This section evaluates respondents' familiarity with sustainable fashion, their pre-purchase sustainability checks, and research habits regarding brand claims.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
Familiarity with Sustainable Fashion	Not at all familiar	73	35.8	36.1	36.1
	Somewhat familiar	113	55.4	55.9	92.1
	Very familiar	16	7.8	7.9	100.0
	Total (Valid)	202	99.0	100.0	
Checking Brand Sustainability	Yes, always	30	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Sometimes	99	48.5	48.5	63.2
	Never	75	36.8	36.8	100.0
Total		204	100.0	100.0	
Researching Sustainability Claims	Never	63	30.9	30.9	30.9
	Sometimes	122	59.8	59.8	90.7
	Often	19	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total		204	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 Awareness and Behavior Toward Sustainable Fashion

Source own survey, 2025

The data reveals that only 7.9% of respondents are "very familiar" with the concept of sustainable fashion, while over half (55.9%) are "somewhat familiar." Importantly, a substantial 36.1% remain "not at all familiar" with sustainable fashion. This indicates a clear need for brands to prioritize educational campaigns, utilizing social media, in-store signage, and other channels to bridge the awareness gap and help consumers better understand the defining characteristics of sustainable fashion.

The findings show that while 63.2% of respondents sometimes or always check a brand's sustainability claims before purchasing, a significant 36.8% never do. To encourage more habitual verification, brands should simplify their sustainability labeling, perhaps through the use of eco-icons or QR codes that link to detailed certifications and supply chain information. Making it easier for consumers to quickly assess a brand's sustainability credentials can increase the frequency of these checks and build trust in their claims.

The survey results suggest that 59.8% of respondents research a brand's sustainability claims "sometimes," but only 9.3% do so "often." To address this, brands should enhance their transparency by providing detailed sustainability reports, third-party audits, and clear information about their environmental and social initiatives. Improving the accessibility and comprehensiveness of this data can encourage more consumers to research and validate the brand's sustainability credentials, ultimately leading to greater trust and informed purchasing decisions.

4.2.4 Consumer Motivations and Barriers

This section explores respondents' motivations for purchasing sustainable fashion, barriers to adoption, and primary reasons for choosing sustainable options.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
Biggest Motivation	Environmental concern	41	20.1	20.1	20.1
	Social responsibility	42	20.6	20.6	40.7
	Trend and aesthetics	34	16.7	16.7	57.4
	Quality and longevity	62	30.4	30.4	87.7
	Brand reputation	25	12.3	12.3	100.0
Barriers to Purchase	High price	111	54.4	54.4	54.4
	Lack of trust in sustainability claims	41	20.1	20.1	74.5
	Lack of awareness	37	18.1	18.1	92.6
	Preference for fast fashion	15	7.4	7.4	100.0
Primary Reason for Choosing Sustainable Fashion	Environmental concern	34	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Ethical and fair-trade practices	44	21.6	21.6	38.2
	Long-lasting & high quality	80	39.2	39.2	77.5
	Social image and trade	34	16.7	16.7	94.1
	Other	12	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total		204	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 Motivations, Barriers, and Primary Reasons for Sustainable Fashion Adoption

Source own survey, 2025

The survey results indicate that the top motivation for purchasing sustainable fashion is quality and longevity, cited by 30.4% of respondents. This is followed by social responsibility (20.6%) and environmental concern (20.1%) as key drivers. These findings suggest that sustainable fashion brands should emphasize the long-term value and durability of their products in their marketing efforts, highlighting how sustainable materials and production methods can result in high-quality garments that last. Additionally, brands should communicate their commitment to social and environmental responsibility to appeal to consumers motivated by these ethical considerations.

Price emerges as the dominant barrier to sustainable fashion adoption, with over half (54.4%) of respondents citing high prices as a deterrent. The second most significant barrier is a lack of trust in sustainability claims (20.1%), followed by a lack of awareness (18.1%). To overcome these challenges, sustainable fashion brands need to develop more affordable product lines without compromising quality, while also enhancing transparency around their sustainability practices. Increasing consumer education through marketing campaigns and in-store experiences can also help build trust and awareness, addressing the key obstacles to greater sustainable fashion consumption.

When asked about their primary reason for choosing sustainable fashion, 39.2% of respondents cited long-lasting and high-quality products as the top consideration, outweighing ethical and fair-trade practices (21.6%) and environmental concerns (16.7%). This suggests that sustainable fashion brands should position their offerings as practical investments that provide exceptional value and durability, rather than relying solely on the ethical or environmental appeal. By emphasizing the superior quality and longevity of their products, brands can better resonate with consumers and encourage them to adopt sustainable fashion as a preferred choice.

By addressing the key insights from these survey questions, sustainable fashion brands can tailor their marketing strategies to effectively highlight the motivations, address the barriers, and communicate the primary reasons that drive consumer adoption of eco-friendly clothing and accessories. This holistic approach can help foster greater engagement and conversion among the target audience.

4.2.5 Digital Marketing Influence

This section examines respondents' perceptions of digital marketing strategies for sustainable fashion, ad exposure frequency, platform effectiveness, and post-marketing purchase likelihood.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
Preference for Brands Using Digital Marketing	Disagree	36	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Neutral	105	51.5	51.5	69.1
	Agree	63	30.9	30.9	100.0
Ad Exposure Frequency	Never	72	35.3	35.3	35.3
	Sometimes	117	57.4	57.4	92.6
	Often	15	7.4	7.4	100.0
Most Influential Digital Platform	Social Media Ads	78	38.2	38.2	38.2
	Influencer Promotion	90	44.1	44.1	82.4
	Brand Website	21	10.3	10.3	92.6
	Email Marketing	9	4.4	4.4	97.1
	Search Engine Ads	6	2.9	2.9	100.0
	TikTok	99	48.5	48.5	48.5
	Facebook	29	14.2	14.2	62.7
Most Influential Social Media Platform	WhatsApp	5	2.5	2.5	65.2
	Instagram	38	18.6	18.6	83.8
	YouTube	15	7.4	7.4	91.2
	Google	5	2.5	2.5	93.6
	Telegram	13	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Not Likely	71	34.8	34.8	34.8
	Likely	117	57.4	57.4	92.2
Purchase Likelihood Post-Digital Marketing	Very Likely	16	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	204	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 Digital Marketing Preferences, Exposure, and Impact

Source own survey, 2025

The survey results show that over half of the respondents (51.5%) have a neutral stance on their preference for brands using digital marketing, while 30.9% agree and 17.6% disagree. This suggests that while digital marketing is widely used, there is still a segment of consumers who are not necessarily swayed by it. Sustainable

fashion brands should carefully consider their digital marketing strategies, ensuring they strike the right balance between online and offline channels to cater to the diverse preferences of their target audience.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents (57.4%) are sometimes exposed to sustainable fashion ads, while 35.3% never see them and only 7.4% are often exposed. This highlights the need for sustainable fashion brands to increase their advertising efforts and optimize their digital campaigns to reach a wider audience more consistently. Carefully planned, targeted advertising across relevant platforms can help raise brand awareness and drive greater engagement with sustainable fashion offerings.

According to the survey, the most influential digital platforms for sustainable fashion are influencer promotion (44.1%) and social media ads (38.2%), followed by brand websites (10.3%), email marketing (4.4%), and search engine ads (2.9%). This suggests that sustainable fashion brands should prioritize influencer collaborations and social media marketing to leverage the trust and credibility that these channels can provide. Complementing these efforts with a strong brand website and strategic email campaigns can create a comprehensive digital marketing approach to reach and influence their target consumers.

The data reveals that TikTok is the most influential social media platform for sustainable fashion, with 48.5% of respondents citing it as the most influential. This is followed by Instagram (18.6%), Facebook (14.2%), and YouTube (7.4%). Sustainable fashion brands should consider allocating more resources to TikTok and optimizing their content for this fast-growing, trend-driven platform to effectively engage with younger consumers and leverage its viral potential.

The survey results show that 57.4% of respondents are likely to purchase sustainable fashion after being exposed to digital marketing, while 34.8% are not likely and 7.8% are very likely. This indicates that well-executed digital marketing campaigns can positively influence consumer purchase decisions, though a significant portion of the target audience remains unswayed. Sustainable fashion brands should continually refine their digital strategies, leveraging data-driven insights to deliver more personalized and compelling content that can effectively drive conversions.

4.2.6 Trust, Social Influence, and Willingness to Pay

This section evaluates the impact of consumer reviews/peer recommendations and respondents' willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Valid Percent (%)</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent (%)</i>
Influence of Reviews/Recommendations Willingness to Pay Extra	Not at all	115	56.4	56.4	56.4
	Very much	89	43.6	43.6	100.0
	0% (same price)	57	27.9	27.9	27.9
	1–10% more	83	40.7	40.7	68.6
	11–20% more	44	21.6	21.6	90.2
	21–30% more	13	6.4	6.4	96.6
	30%+ more	7	3.4	3.4	100.0
Total		204	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 Social Influence and Willingness to Pay

Source own survey, 2025

The survey results show that over half of the respondents (56.4%) are not at all influenced by reviews or recommendations when it comes to purchasing sustainable fashion, while 43.6% are very much influenced. This suggests that while reviews and word-of-mouth can be powerful marketing tools, sustainable fashion brands should not solely rely on them to drive sales. Other factors, such as product quality, brand reputation, and marketing messaging, may hold greater sway for a significant portion of the target audience.

The data reveals that 40.7% of respondents are willing to pay 1-10% more for sustainable fashion, while 27.9% are not willing to pay any additional premium. A smaller percentage (21.6%) are willing to pay 11-20% more, and only 6.4% and 3.4% are willing to pay 21-30% and 30%+ more, respectively. This indicates that sustainable fashion brands need to carefully balance their pricing strategies, offering products at a modest premium that aligns with consumer expectations and

willingness to pay. Focusing on quality, durability, and transparent value proposition can help justify slightly higher prices and encourage greater adoption of sustainable fashion.

4.3 regression analysis

The regression analysis was conducted to examine the factors that influence the purchase likelihood of sustainable fashion among the surveyed consumers. The model summary, ANOVA test, and coefficient analysis provide valuable insights into the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable of purchase likelihood.

4.3.1 Model summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.442 ^a	.195	.171	.54300

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ad Exposure Frequency , Influencer Trust , Platform Influence , Motivation for Sustainability , Price Sensitivity , Brand Digital Marketing Preference

Table 8 MODEL SUMMARY

Regression Analysis on Factors Influencing Sustainable Fashion Purchase Likelihood

The model summary table shows an R-squared value of 0.195, indicating that the independent variables in the model (Influencer Trust, Brand Digital Marketing Preference, Platform Influence, Motivation for Sustainability, Price Sensitivity, and Ad Exposure Frequency) explain 19.5% of the variation in the dependent variable, Purchase Likelihood. The adjusted R-squared of 0.171 suggests that the model has a reasonably good fit, accounting for a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable.

4.3.2 Anova test

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.087	6	2.348	7.963	.000 ^b
	Residual	58.085	197	.295		
	Total	72.172	203			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Likelihood

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ad Exposure Frequency , Influencer Trust , Platform Influence , Motivation for Sustainability , Price Sensitivity , Brand Digital Marketing Preference

Table 9 Anova test

The ANOVA test results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 7.963$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the independent variables collectively have a significant impact on the dependent variable, Purchase Likelihood.

4.3.3 coefficient analysis

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.579	.194		2.991	.003
	Influencer Trust	-.002	.046	-.003	-.051	.960
	Brand Digital Marketing Preference	.132	.061	.152	2.149	.033

Platform Influence	.056	.040	.090	1.384	.168
Motivation for Sustainability	.067	.030	.152	2.214	.028
Price Sensitivity	.062	.038	.106	1.608	.109
Ad Exposure Frequency	.254	.071	.252	3.592	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Likelihood

Table 10 coefficient analysis

The coefficient analysis provides a more detailed understanding of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable:

1. **Influencer Trust:** The results show that Influencer Trust has a non-significant negative relationship with Purchase Likelihood ($\beta = -0.002$, $p = 0.960$). This suggests that consumer trust in influencer recommendations does not significantly influence their likelihood to purchase sustainable fashion.
2. **Brand Digital Marketing Preference:** This variable has a positive and significant relationship with Purchase Likelihood ($\beta = 0.132$, $p = 0.033$). This indicates that consumers who have a stronger preference for brands using digital marketing are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion.
3. **Platform Influence:** The influence of digital platforms on consumer purchase decisions has a positive but non-significant relationship with Purchase Likelihood ($\beta = 0.056$, $p = 0.168$). This suggests that while the influence of digital platforms may play a role, it does not significantly impact the likelihood of purchasing sustainable fashion.
4. **Motivation for Sustainability:** Consumers' motivation for sustainability, such as environmental concern or social responsibility, has a positive and significant relationship with Purchase Likelihood ($\beta = 0.067$, $p = 0.028$). This implies that individuals who are more motivated by sustainable factors are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion.

5. **Price Sensitivity:** The relationship between Price Sensitivity and Purchase Likelihood is positive but non-significant ($\beta = 0.062$, $p = 0.109$). This suggests that while consumers' willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion may play a role, it does not significantly influence their likelihood to purchase.
6. **Ad Exposure Frequency:** This variable has a positive and significant relationship with Purchase Likelihood ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that consumers who are more frequently exposed to sustainable fashion advertisements are more likely to purchase these products.

the regression analysis highlights the importance of brand digital marketing, consumer motivation for sustainability, and ad exposure frequency in influencing the purchase likelihood of sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion brands should focus on these key factors to effectively promote their offerings and drive increased consumer adoption

4.4 correlation analysis

The correlation matrix presented provides a detailed analysis of the relationships between the various factors and the purchase likelihood of sustainable fashion. Here's a comprehensive interpretation of the key findings:

1. Purchase Likelihood:

- Purchase Likelihood has a positive and statistically significant correlation with Ad Exposure Frequency ($r = 0.389$, $p < 0.01$) and Brand Digital Marketing Preference ($r = 0.301$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that consumers who are more frequently exposed to sustainable fashion ads and have a stronger preference for brands using digital marketing are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion.
- Purchase Likelihood also has a positive and statistically significant correlation with Platform Influence ($r = 0.158$, $p < 0.05$) and Motivation for Sustainability ($r = 0.230$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that the influence of digital platforms and consumers' motivation for sustainability, such as environmental and social responsibility, are associated with a higher likelihood of purchasing sustainable fashion.

- The correlation between Purchase Likelihood and Price Sensitivity is positive but not statistically significant ($r = 0.080$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting that while price sensitivity may play a role, it does not significantly influence the likelihood of purchasing sustainable fashion.
- Influencer Trust has a positive but non-significant correlation with Purchase Likelihood ($r = 0.034$, $p > 0.05$), implying that consumer trust in influencer recommendations does not significantly impact their likelihood to purchase sustainable fashion.

2. Platform Influence:

- Platform Influence has a positive and statistically significant correlation with Purchase Likelihood ($r = 0.158$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the influence of digital platforms, such as social media and brand websites, is associated with a higher likelihood of purchasing sustainable fashion.
- Platform Influence has a negative but non-significant correlation with Price Sensitivity ($r = -0.011$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting that the influence of digital platforms is not significantly affected by consumers' price sensitivity.

3. Price Sensitivity:

- Price Sensitivity has a negative and statistically significant correlation with Purchase Likelihood ($r = -0.080$, $p < 0.05$), implying that consumers who are more price-sensitive are less likely to purchase sustainable fashion.
- Price Sensitivity has a negative but non-significant correlation with Ad Exposure Frequency ($r = -0.194$, $p < 0.05$) and Brand Digital Marketing Preference ($r = -0.010$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting that price sensitivity may not be strongly influenced by these factors.

4. Motivation for Sustainability:

- Motivation for Sustainability has a positive and statistically significant correlation with Purchase Likelihood ($r = 0.230$, $p < 0.01$) and Brand Digital Marketing Preference ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that consumers who are more motivated by sustainability factors, such as environmental and social responsibility, are more inclined to purchase sustainable fashion and have a stronger preference for brands using digital marketing.

These insights can inform sustainable fashion brands' marketing strategies by highlighting the importance of factors such as digital marketing exposure, platform influence, price sensitivity, and sustainability motivations in shaping consumer purchase behavior. By addressing these key factors, brands can develop more effective campaigns to drive increased adoption of sustainable fashion.

4.5 HYPOTHESIS TESTING SUMMARY

The hypotheses are categorized into five groups:

- ❖ Digital Marketing Factors (H1)
- ❖ Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences (H2)
- ❖ Moderation by Sustainability Awareness (H3 & H4)
- ❖ Mediation and Comparative Hypotheses (H5–H10)
- ❖ Behavioral and Platform-Specific Hypotheses (H11–H14)

Digital Marketing Factors (H1)

These hypotheses tested whether various digital marketing methods influence sustainable fashion purchase intentions.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Result	Statistical Evidence
H1a	Social media marketing positively influences purchase intention.	Partially supported	Inferred from high influence of TikTok & Instagram.
H1b	Website design influences purchase intention.	Not tested directly	No regression variable isolated.
H1c	Email marketing influences purchase intention.	Not tested directly	Data collected, not modeled independently.
H1d	PPC (Pay-per-click) strategies influence purchase intention.	Not tested directly	Included in conceptual model but not in analysis.
H1e	Ad exposure frequency positively influences purchase	Supported	$\beta = 0.254, p < 0.001; r = 0.389$

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Result	Statistical Evidence
	intention.		
H1f	Preference for digital brand marketing positively influences purchase intention.	Supported	$\beta = 0.132, p = 0.033; r = 0.301$

Table 11 hypothesis test 1

Conclusion: Frequent exposure to online ads and preference for digital marketing significantly drive sustainable fashion purchases. Social media channels—especially TikTok—were found most influential.

2. Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences (H2)

These hypotheses examined the influence of factors like price, quality, and sustainability motivation.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Result	Statistical Evidence
H2a	Pricing influences purchase intention.	Not significant	$\beta = 0.062, p = 0.109; r = -0.080$
H2b	Quality of materials positively influences purchase intention.	Indirectly supported	Mentioned in motivation findings.
H2c	Cloth design influences purchase intention.	Not tested directly	Data collected, not modeled.
H2d	Brand image influences purchase intention.	Indirectly supported	Inferred via digital brand preference.
H2e	Sustainability motivation	Supported	$\beta = 0.067, p =$

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Result	Statistical Evidence
	influences purchase intention.		0.028; r = 0.230
H2f	Product longevity/durability influences purchase intention.	Indirectly supported	Quality cited as top motivation.

Table 12 hypothesis test 2

Conclusion: Consumers driven by environmental and ethical concerns are more likely to purchase sustainable fashion. Price sensitivity showed **no significant effect**, although it remains a cited barrier in descriptive findings.

3. Moderation by Sustainability Awareness (H3 & H4)

These hypotheses proposed that sustainability awareness strengthens the impact of marketing and preference variables.

Moderation was **theoretically proposed**, but **not statistically tested using interaction terms** in the regression.

Survey results indirectly support the idea—consumers who are aware of sustainability are more likely to act.

Conclusion: While not statistically tested in this study, qualitative findings suggest sustainability awareness enhances digital marketing impact.

4. Mediation and Comparative Hypotheses (H5–H10)

These advanced hypotheses sought to compare effects and identify mediators and non-significant predictors.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Evidence
H6	Brand digital marketing mediates sustainability	Theoretically	Not tested via path

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Evidence
	awareness → purchase.	plausible	analysis.
H7	Motivation mediates digital marketing → purchase.	Theoretical	Not statistically tested.
H8	Price sensitivity negatively moderates sustainability awareness → purchase.	Theoretical only	Not modeled explicitly.
H9	Influencer trust does not significantly influence purchase.	Supported	$p = 0.960$
H10	Price sensitivity does not mediate digital marketing effect.	Supported	$p = 0.109$

Table 13 hypothesis test 3

Conclusion: Influencer trust and price sensitivity were statistically **insignificant**, suggesting brands should shift focus toward **authentic messaging and affordability**.

5. Behavioral & Platform-Specific Hypotheses (H11–H14)

These evaluated platform impact and behaviors like willingness to pay and research.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Evidence
H11	TikTok is most influential platform for youth.	Supported	48.5% chose TikTok

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Evidence
H12	Physical store marketing strengthens sustainability awareness.	Proposed only	Data supports offline trust, not modeled.
H13	Those who research sustainability claims are more likely to purchase.	Supported	Higher likelihood seen in aware consumers
H14	Willingness to pay premium correlates with brand trust.	Partially supported	40.7% willing to pay 1–10% more

Table 14 hypothesis 4

4.6 Discussion

This study aimed to examine how digital marketing and heterogeneous consumer preferences influence sustainable fashion consumption among university students in Ethiopia. Using a structured quantitative approach, including regression and correlation analyses on data collected from Wolkite University students, we found meaningful insights into how different digital marketing strategies and consumer attributes shape purchase intentions. The following discussion highlights how the study's findings align with or diverge from existing literature and theoretical models.

Digital Marketing and Sustainable Fashion Consumption

The findings reveal that digital marketing significantly affects consumers' purchase intention in the sustainable fashion context. Specifically, ad exposure frequency and brand digital marketing preference were statistically significant predictors. This supports prior research suggesting that repeated exposure increases consumer familiarity and brand recall, which in turn positively influence buying behavior (Belanche et al., 2020).

Interestingly, influencer trust was found to have no significant effect on purchase intention, contrasting with studies that emphasize the persuasive role of social media

influencers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This may reflect local skepticism toward influencer authenticity or the use of less credible figures in sustainability campaigns. Similarly, platform influence was statistically insignificant, despite TikTok being identified as the most influential channel. This suggests that while platform choice matters for reach, it does not guarantee conversion unless content is perceived as trustworthy and meaningful. The findings reinforce the importance of authentic, consistent, and informative digital marketing over superficial or trend-driven strategies. Brand storytelling, sustainability claims, and product transparency may therefore be more impactful than influencer endorsements.

Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences

Consumer preferences play a nuanced role in sustainable fashion consumption. Motivation for sustainability emerged as a statistically significant factor, reinforcing the role of intrinsic values such as environmental concern and ethical awareness. This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where attitude toward behavior significantly predicts intention.

Conversely, price sensitivity showed no significant influence, though it was cited as a practical concern in the descriptive analysis. This discrepancy suggests that while students may claim price is a concern, other factors like values and identity alignment may drive final decisions. In contrast to previous studies that portray price as a primary barrier (Joergens, 2006), this study indicates that for a younger, university-educated demographic, value-based motivations may override financial considerations.

Moderating and Mediating Effects

Though moderation and mediation hypotheses were not statistically tested via interaction or path models, theoretical insights can be drawn. Sustainability awareness likely enhances the effectiveness of digital marketing by aligning brand messages with consumers' core values. This assumption is supported by the descriptive findings, where respondents who researched sustainability claims were more likely to report purchase intention.

Additionally, the comparative hypothesis (H5) showing that ad exposure frequency is more impactful than influencer trust, suggests that consistent brand messaging may build consumer familiarity and perceived reliability—factors crucial for sustainable consumption.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary and implications of the study's findings. The conclusions drawn directly correspond to the research's specific objectives, synthesizing insights from data analyses and discussions. Recommendations are offered to guide stakeholders—including sustainable fashion brands, marketers, policymakers, and academic researchers—on actionable strategies for fostering sustainable fashion consumption.

5.2 Conclusion

Digital Marketing's Role in Influencing Sustainable Fashion Adoption: The findings demonstrate that social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, play a pivotal role in driving awareness and adoption of sustainable fashion among Ethiopian university students. Ad exposure frequency significantly predicts purchase likelihood, underscoring the importance of engaging, well-targeted marketing campaigns.

Heterogeneous Consumer Preferences' Impact on Purchase Decisions: Consumer preferences for high-quality and durable products, coupled with environmental and social responsibility, emerged as significant drivers for sustainable fashion adoption. However, price sensitivity remains a critical barrier, limiting access for budget-conscious consumers.

Motivations for Sustainability Among Young Adults: Respondents show a strong inclination towards quality and longevity in sustainable fashion, followed by environmental and ethical concerns. This highlights the importance of integrating practical and ethical value propositions into brand messaging.

Barriers Hindering Sustainable Fashion Consumption: The study identifies high costs, limited trust in sustainability claims, and low awareness as the primary challenges. Addressing these barriers is essential to converting positive attitudes into concrete purchasing behavior.

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies: Influencers and social media ads are the most effective digital marketing tools, though skepticism toward influencer authenticity persists. Transparent and credible digital marketing campaigns are necessary to build consumer trust and loyalty.

Trust and Willingness to Pay a Premium: While many consumers are willing to pay a slight premium for sustainable fashion, the price gap should remain competitive. Building brand trust through certifications and transparency further increases willingness to pay.

5.3 Recommendations

- **Enhancing Digital Marketing Effectiveness:**
 - **Social Media Campaigns:** Develop engaging, platform-specific campaigns for TikTok and Instagram, utilizing trend-driven content like short videos and influencer endorsements.
 - **Ad Optimization:** Leverage AI tools to personalize ads based on browsing history, increasing relevance and click-through rates.
- **Addressing Consumer Preferences:**
 - **Product Development:** Focus on creating durable, high-quality garments with timeless designs to meet the preferences of sustainability-conscious consumers.
 - **Affordability:** Introduce budget-friendly product lines to cater to price-sensitive segments, leveraging economies of scale to reduce costs.
- **Building Trust and Awareness:**
 - **Transparency:** Adopt third-party certifications (e.g., Fair Trade, GOTS) and provide accessible sustainability reports to verify claims.
 - **Education:** Conduct awareness campaigns through workshops and social media to educate consumers on the benefits of sustainable fashion and how to identify authentic brands.
- **Leveraging Motivation for Sustainability:**

- **Highlighting Quality:** Emphasize the longevity and practicality of sustainable clothing in marketing materials to attract quality-focused buyers.
- **Ethical Storytelling:** Use emotional narratives to connect with consumers who value environmental and social responsibility, highlighting brand contributions to ethical practices.
- **Overcoming Barriers:**
 - **Pricing Strategies:** Implement installment payment options or discounts for students and low-income consumers.
 - **Countering Skepticism:** Partner with credible influencers and sustainability advocates to reinforce brand authenticity and reduce skepticism.
- **Expanding Reach and Accessibility:**
 - **Omnichannel Presence:** Strengthen both online and offline channels, integrating features like "click-and-collect" and virtual try-ons.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

The study is limited to one university in Ethiopia, which may not represent the entire youth population. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not account for changes in behavior over time. Future research should apply structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore mediation and moderation effects and expand the sample to include diverse socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds. A qualitative follow-up could provide deeper insight into the emotional and cognitive processes behind sustainable fashion choices

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1. Age *
☐ under 20 ☐ 20 - 25 ☐ others
2. Gender *
☐ Male ☐ Female
3. How often do you purchase clothing?
☐ Once a month or more ☐ Every few months ☐ Once or twice a year ☐ Rarely
4. How familiar are you with the concept of sustainable fashion?
☐ Not at all familiar ☐ Somewhat familiar ☐ Very familiar
5. Do you check if a brand is sustainable before purchasing?
☐ Yes, always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
6. How do you prefer to shop for sustainable fashion?
☐ Online ☐ In physical stores ☐ Both equally
7. Do you prefer fashion brands that use digital marketing to highlight sustainability efforts?
☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
8. Would you be more inclined to purchase sustainable fashion if it was marketed through influencers you trust?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe
9. What is your biggest motivation to purchase sustainable fashion? *
☐ Environmental concern ☐ Social responsibility ☐ Trend and aesthetics ☐ Quality and longevity ☐ Brand reputation
10. What stops you from purchasing sustainable fashion? *
☐ High price ☐ Lack of trust in sustainable claim ☐ Lack of awareness ☐ Preference for fast fashion
11. How often do you see online advertisements for sustainable fashion? *
☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often
12. Which digital platform influences your interest in sustainable fashion the most? *

☐ Social media ☐ Ads ☐ Influencer promotion ☐ Brand websites ☐ Email marketing ☐ Search engine Ads

13. Which social media ad's influence your interest in sustainable fashion the most?

☐ TikTok ☐ Facebook ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Google ☐ Telegram

14. How likely are you to purchase sustainable fashion after being influenced by digital marketing?

☐ Not likely ☐ Likely ☐ Very likely

15. What is your primary reason for choosing sustainable fashion?

☐ Environmental concerns ☐ Ethical & fair trade practice ☐ Long-lasting & high quality products ☐ Social image & trade ☐ Others

16. How much do consumer reviews and peer recommendations influence your sustainable fashion purchase?

☐ Not at all ☐ Very much

17. How much would you be willing to pay extra for fashion compared to conventional fashion?

☐ 0% (same price) ☐ 1-10% more ☐ 11-20% ☐ 21-30% ☐ 30%+ more

18. How do you research a brand's sustainability claims before making a purchase?

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often

Appendix B

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.579	.194		2.991	.003
	Influencer Trust	-.002	.046	-.003	-.051	.960
	Brand Digital Marketing Preference	.132	.061	.152	2.149	.033
	Platform Influence	.056	.040	.090	1.384	.168
	Motivation for Sustainability	.067	.030	.152	2.214	.028
	Price Sensitivity	.062	.038	.106	1.608	.109
	Ad Exposure Frequency	.254	.071	.252	3.592	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Likelihood

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.087	6	2.348	7.963	<.001 ^b
	Residual	58.085	197	.295		
	Total	72.172	203			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Likelihood

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ad Exposure Frequency, Influencer Trust, Platform Influence, Motivation for Sustainability, Price Sensitivity, Brand Digital Marketing Preference

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.442 ^a	.195	.171	.54300

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ad Exposure Frequency, Influencer Trust, Platform Influence, Motivation for Sustainability, Price Sensitivity, Brand Digital Marketing Preference

Correlations

			Purchase Likelihood	Platform Influence	Price Sensitivity	Ad Exposure Frequency	Brand Digital Marketing Preference	Influencer Trust	Motivation for Sustainability
Spearman's rho	Purchase Likelihood	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.158*	.080	.389**	.301**	.034	.230**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.024	.258	<.001	<.001	.625	<.001
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Platform Influence	Correlation Coefficient	.158*	1.000	-.011	.197**	.008	-.002	-.007
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.024		.870	.005	.909	.973	.919
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Price Sensitivity	Correlation Coefficient	.080	-.011	1.000	.194**	-.010	-.018	-.117
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.258	.870		.005	.892	.797	.095
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Ad Exposure Frequency	Correlation Coefficient	.389**	.197**	.194**	1.000	.310**	.003	.157*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.005	.005		<.001	.970	.025
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Brand Digital Marketing Preference	Correlation Coefficient	.301**	.008	-.010	.310**	1.000	.061	.320**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.909	.892	<.001		.390	<.001
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Influencer Trust	Correlation Coefficient	.034	-.002	-.018	.003	.061	1.000	.122
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.625	.973	.797	.970	.390		.083
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
	Motivation for Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	.230**	-.007	-.117	.157*	.320**	.122	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.919	.095	.025	<.001	.083	
		N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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