

Fast Fashion and Its Environmental, Economic, and Social Impacts: Consumer Awareness, Attitudes, and Perceptions

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Abstract: - Fast fashion is increasingly associated with significant environmental, economic, and social consequences. This article examines consumer awareness of fast fashion, purchasing behavior, attitudes towards this model, and perceptions of its selected negative impacts. The study is based on a questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of 577 respondents. Descriptive analysis was complemented by inferential testing using one-way ANOVA and Tukey's HSD test. The results suggest that respondents were generally familiar with the concept of fast fashion and perceived its environmental impacts more strongly than its economic or cultural dimensions. Textile waste, water pollution, water and energy consumption, and excessive use of natural resources were among the most strongly perceived issues. In the social dimension, respondents reported relatively strong perceptions of child labor, human rights violations, health risks, and employee exploitation. Inferential analysis showed that respondents familiar with the concept of fast fashion perceived the environmental burden of textile waste more strongly than those unfamiliar with it. At the same time, respondents who reported purchasing fast fashion expressed a less negative attitude towards it than non-buyers. These findings point to a possible gap between awareness and actual consumer behavior in the field of sustainable fashion consumption.

Key-Words: - apparel industry, fast fashion awareness, purchasing behaviour, textile waste, consumer attitudes, sustainable fashion, attitude – behaviour gap

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1 Introduction

Fast fashion (FF) is commonly understood as a high-speed apparel model based on rapid trend imitation, low production costs, short product life cycles, and intensified consumption [1], [2], [3]. In the literature, it is increasingly described not only as a retail strategy, but as a systemic model embedded in a linear “take–make–dispose” logic that promotes overproduction, low product use, and rising post-consumer waste [4], [5]. Its environmental, economic, and social

consequences should be understood as interlinked outcomes of the same production and consumption regime. From an environmental standpoint, the literature identifies core pressures such as carbon emissions, energy demand, water use, chemical pollution, and textile waste as the principal concerns associated with FF and textile production [6], [7]. These pressures arise across the full textile life cycle—from raw material extraction and fiber production to processing, transport, use, and end-of-

life treatment. In this regard, synthetic fibers, dyeing and finishing, laundering, and weak recovery systems have been highlighted as major contributors to carbon intensity, water contamination, and resource depletion, with broader burdens intensified by globalized sourcing, fragmented supply chains, and uneven environmental governance [8], [9]. Some analyses also emphasize that supply chain governance and structure increase environmental burdens beyond individual production steps, while others discuss how circular economy (CE) practices may mitigate these pressures through extended product life cycles and improved end-of-life management [9], [10]. Differences in emphasis among studies reflect ongoing debates about the most effective points of intervention and the role of governance, technology, and consumer behavior in reducing environmental impact.

The economic literature describes FF as temporarily viable but structurally fragile over time, reflecting tensions between rapid turnover and longer-run sustainability pressures [11]. Cost-oriented, speed-to-market strategies in fashion supply chains, such as low-price positioning, offshore sourcing, and rapid stock turnover, support immediate accessibility and sales growth, but these advantages rest on low margins and volatile demand, while simultaneously externalizing environmental and social costs. As sustainability expectations intensify, reputational risk rises, and due diligence requirements expand, several studies question FF's ability to remain economically viable [12], [13], [14], [15]. The turn toward adopting CE-oriented alternatives such as resale, rental, repair, and product-service systems is increasingly framed as a way to reduce material intensity while preserving value creation. Nevertheless, studies examining drivers and barriers to CE adoption and the potential for value retention through durable-use models remain constrained by implementation costs, data requirements, organizational inertia, and uncertain consumer demand [16], [17]. Through the literature, the balance between internal business-model factors and external political or market pressures appears to be a key determinant of whether FF can adapt to a more sustainable organization (towards a continuous economy and related governance reform). While some studies emphasize internal factors (e.g., organizational capabilities, resource efficiency) as central to CE adoption, others emphasize external factors such as regulation, market demand, and consumer behavior, emphasizing that adoption pathways are not uniform and may vary by context [18]. The social dimension of FF is equally significant. The literature links FF to low wages, unsafe working conditions, subcontracting, weak

labor representation, and precarious employment in export-oriented supply chains. These conditions are widely interpreted as structural consequences of buyer-driven systems in which speed and cost minimization take priority over worker protection [19], [20], [21], [22]. Voluntary CSR tools, social audits, and supplier codes are often criticized as inadequate because they strengthen corporate legitimacy more than they protect labor [23]. Much of the literature supports stronger accountability through binding agreements, due diligence mechanisms, remedial procedures, stakeholder pressure, and greater worker voice, highlighting a shift towards governance-based sustainability in fashion systems. Overall, FF should not be understood simply as an unsustainable consumption trend but as a systemic model in which environmental degradation, economic vulnerability, and social harms reinforce each other, a view that situates FF within broader transitions towards sustainability [24], [25], [26]. At the global level, FF is increasingly understood as a governance challenge rather than just a market phenomenon, given the cross-jurisdictional nature of production, sourcing, branding, and disposal; sustainability outcomes therefore depend on harmonized standards, due diligence, traceability, credible verification, and effective enforcement [27]. Fragmented regulatory regimes are considered problematic because they create an uneven compliance condition, encourage regulatory leakage, and undermine the credibility of environmental and social claims, highlighting the importance of public policy as a strategic tool to reshape supply chains, market incentives, and sustainability expectations at a global level. Within this broader context, the European Union (EU) is frequently described as one of the leading actors in the sustainability transition of fashion. EU initiatives related to the circular economy, textile waste prevention, eco-design, sustainability reporting, and non-financial disclosure have moved fashion governance toward a broader model of circular and accountable value creation. At the same time, several studies point to uneven implementation across Member States, administrative burdens, differences in institutional capacity, and irregularities in compliance between larger organizations and smaller suppliers. EU governance is therefore often described as ambitious but uneven in practice, and its success depends not only on regulation itself, but also on institutional coordination, cross-border cooperation, and infrastructure enabling circularity in practice [28], [29].

In this framework, the role of the EU is complemented by discussions on restoring the balance between strict regulatory rules and softer governance

mechanisms. A hybrid model, where regulation is complemented by reporting, labelling, transparency, stakeholder engagement, and consumer information, is widely supported, although concerns persist that information-based tools lose effectiveness when indicators are weak, verification is weak, or organizations replace substantive compliance with token sustainability messages [30], [31]. Sustainability management in fashion is therefore considered most credible when environmental goals, labour standards, and market responsibility are pursued together through the value chain, a perspective that is illustrated by how different fashion segments create shared values through sustainable, responsible practices [32]. In the context of implementing circular fashion, investments in advances in textile recycling and technologies that increase the efficiency and sustainability of the entire supply chain are essential [33]. The literature likewise indicates that the transition towards sustainable fashion cannot be explained solely by changes in production systems or regulatory frameworks; still, consumer behaviour plays a critical role in determining whether circular alternatives achieve market acceptance. In Europe, responses to circular fashion (CF) are shaped not only by environmental concern but also by perceived value, risk, trust, quality, convenience, and symbolic meaning [34], [35]. Studies on circular fashion show that emotional and symbolic value can improve attitudes toward second-hand, upcycled, and recycled garments, while concerns about performance, hygiene, and price continue to weaken purchase intentions. This shows that environmental awareness doesn't automatically result in circular purchasing. Trust and communication are other important topics. Sustainability claims support purchase intent when consumers perceive them as credible, coherent, and associated with broader brand trust, while vague or poorly supported communication tends to increase skepticism and reinforce perceptions of greenwashing. As a result, transparency, labelling, and sustainability signalling are necessary but not sufficient unless they are complemented by verification, clear product information, and trustworthy institutional support [36], [37], [38]. Education, slow-fashion narratives, and circular literacy are discussed as useful but limited solutions for the development of circular fashion, especially in the context of luxury, premium, and consumer understanding [39]. Similarly, designers' attitudes towards CE influence their business decisions in the context of fast vs. sustainable fashion [40]. Better knowledge about sustainability may increase openness to longer product lifecycles and more

responsible consumption, but the gap between attitudes and behaviour remains significant, as many consumers still prioritise affordability, speed, and variety in their everyday purchasing decisions. Comparative studies suggest that circular strategies often align more easily with premium and luxury segments than with low-cost fast fashion, where disposability and hedonistic appeal, along with price competition, remain deeply entrenched [41], [42], [43]. In line with European CE-driven trends eco-design and CE-aligned fashion practices are presented as integral to achieving sustainable outcomes in the textile sector [44], [45]. Finally, we cannot forget the role of consumer awareness in supporting the transition to circular fashion [46]. From policy and management perspectives, the most promising path combines credible sustainability communication, circular business model innovation, stakeholder-driven sustainability practices, and support for market regulation that reduces perceived risk for consumers and makes circular options more accessible and attractive [47], [48], [49]. Overall, the literature suggests that a sustainable transformation of fast fashion will depend less on isolated green messages and more on aligning policy signals, redesigning business models, and delivering consumer-centric systems that can gradually change both attitudes and behaviours.

2 Methodology

The empirical part of the article is based on a questionnaire survey focused on the environmental, economic, and social challenges associated with fast fashion. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items structured into several thematic blocks, of which only those relevant to the focus of the present article were included in the analysis. The demographic section collected data on respondents' gender and the highest level of education. The following items examined awareness of fast fashion, fast fashion purchasing, and attitudes toward fast fashion, assessed on a five-point scale where 1 indicated a very positive attitude and 5 a very negative attitude. Another block assessed respondents' perceptions of selected negative social, economic, and environmental consequences of fast fashion using a five-point scale ranging from 1 – I perceive them very strongly to 5 – I do not perceive them at all. The survey provided 577 valid responses and was distributed electronically. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

For inferential testing, awareness of fast fashion and fast fashion purchasing were treated as explanatory grouping variables with three categories (yes, no, do not know). The selected dependent

variables were the item “large amount of textile waste” and attitude toward fast fashion, as these directly corresponded to the formulated hypotheses.

H1: Respondents who are familiar with the concept of fast fashion perceive the environmental burden in the form of a large amount of textile waste more strongly than respondents who are not familiar with the concept.

The theoretical rationale for Hypothesis 1 is based on literature describing fast fashion as a model associated with high production volumes, short product lifecycles, and a growing amount of post-consumer waste. Previous research describes the fashion industry as operating within a linear “take-make-dispose” logic and highlights the significant environmental consequences of the textile and apparel industry, including its high material and environmental intensity and the increasing volume of waste [1], [2], [4], [6]. Based on these arguments, it can be assumed that respondents who are familiar with the concept of fast fashion will also perceive the specific environmental consequences of this model more strongly, including the large amount of textile waste.

H2: Respondents who purchase fast fashion have a less negative overall attitude toward fast fashion than respondents who do not purchase it.

The theoretical rationale for Hypothesis 2 is based on studies suggesting that fast fashion purchasing is influenced not only by environmental considerations but also by factors such as perceived value, affordability, the attractiveness of the retail environment, novelty, and hedonic motives [22], [41], [43]. Previous research emphasizes the influence of the fast fashion retail environment, fashion involvement, and hedonic motives on consumer behaviour [22], [43]. It has also been shown that environmentally oriented consumer decision-making is influenced by multiple factors, not solely by environmental attitudes [41]. Based on these arguments, it can be assumed that respondents who actively purchase fast fashion will evaluate this model less negatively than respondents who do not purchase fast fashion.

Because both explanatory variables consisted of three categories, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used, followed by Tukey’s HSD post hoc test. Although the analysed indicators were measured using Likert-type items, they were treated as approximately interval-level variables, which is a common approach in social science research with larger samples. Statistical analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics. For significant pairwise differences, Tukey’s HSD results were complemented by mean differences, 95% confidence intervals, and

Cohen’s *d*. For the items measuring perceived negative impacts, lower scores indicated stronger perceived effects, while for the attitude item, lower scores indicated a more positive, or less negative, attitude toward fast fashion.

2.1 Statistical Analysis

To account for the multivariate structure of the data, the analytical framework was expanded beyond the descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA used to test H1 and H2. The psychometric properties of the multi-item batteries were established prior to hypothesis testing, their underlying dimensional structure was investigated, and the assumptions of the parametric tests were verified and supplemented with robust procedures. All analyses were conducted on the full sample of 577 respondents, for whom the relevant Likert items had no missing values.

Cronbach’s coefficient alpha and corrected item – total correlations were used to assess internal consistency of the three Likert batteries – perceived attribute importance (13 items), perceived negative impacts of fast fashion (18 items) and self-reported buying behaviour (14 items). The dimensionality of each battery was evaluated using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal-axis factoring and oblique (direct oblimin) rotation; sampling adequacy was assessed using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s test of sphericity, and the number of factors retained was determined by the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1) along with the scree plot. The factor structure of the concern battery was subsequently cross-validated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) estimated by maximum likelihood. Model fit was assessed by the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Composite scores were calculated as the mean of their constituent items based on the factor solution and retained the original 1–5 metric. Before performing inferential testing, the normality of the model residuals was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test and normal Q–Q plots, and the homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene’s test. Because the normality assumption failed and variances were unequal for some comparisons, each one-way ANOVA (including the tests of H1 and H2) was supported by the variance-robust Welch and Brown–Forsythe F-tests, the non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis test, and the Games–Howell post-hoc procedure, which does not assume equal variances. Effect sizes are presented as eta-squared (η^2) for omnibus tests and Cohen’s *d* for pairwise contrasts.

Composite scores in the above analyses were created by averaging the following items (each on the

five-point scale described above); age was taken as a continuous covariate:

Environmental concern (6 items): water and energy consumption; water pollution; large amount of textile waste; greenhouse-gas emissions; excessive use of natural resources; and rising carbon footprint.

Ethical / human-rights concern (4 items): child labour; human rights violations; health risks; and employee exploitation.

Socio-cultural concern (7 items): spread of a consumerist lifestyle; emergence of shopping addiction; loss of domestic culture and adaptation to global trends; support for large fashion chains; pressure for constant innovation and short delivery cycles; low employee wages; and reduction of production costs. The item 'job instability' was retained in the overall 18-item concern scale but, following the factor analysis, was not assigned to any subscale.

Functional importance (10 items): price; quality; design/style; composition; sustainability; availability; shopping comfort; durability / material resistance; functionality; and warranty. The importance items 'brand', 'country of origin' and 'fashion trends' were not included, as they formed separate factors.

Impulsive / social-image buying (8 items): willingness to go into debt for fashion; concealing purchases from close ones; being unable to stop thinking about appealing fashion; dissatisfaction until a desired item is bought; buying fashion known to be unnecessary; fear of appearing unfashionable; regularly refreshing the wardrobe; and feeling socially more attractive when fashionably dressed.

Age: respondents' age in completed years (range 15–80), entered as a continuous covariate in the regression model.

To model the multivariate determinants of attitudes, a multiple linear regression was estimated with attitude toward fast fashion as the dependent variable and the concern and importance composites, impulsive buying, age, and gender (dummy-coded) as predictors, and tolerance and the variance inflation factor were used to assess multicollinearity. In order to decompose the indirect effect of environmental concern, attitude, and buying behavior, a mediation model was estimated, and the significance of the indirect effect was tested using bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (5,000 resamples). Finally, an exploratory k-means cluster analysis was performed on the standardized composite scores to identify consumer segments. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The confirmatory factor model was estimated using IBM SPSS v 26.0.

The paper should consider the following methodological limitations.

1. The questionnaire was distributed electronically - it was completed by respondents with access to the internet.

2. Participation of respondents was voluntary - it was completed by respondents with an interest in this issue.

The research sample was imbalanced.

3. The results cannot be generalised to the entire population.

4. The responses are based on subjective perceptions of respondents.

3 Results

The questionnaire survey involved 577 respondents, of which 418 were women, 153 men, and 6 who did not wish to disclose their gender (see Figure 1).

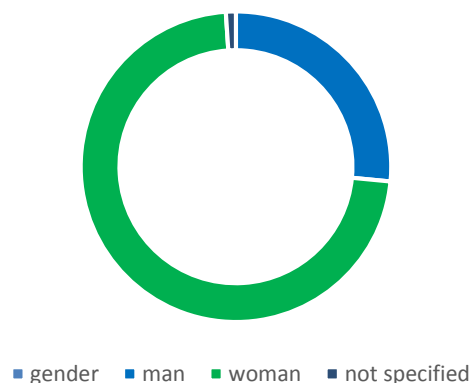


Fig. 1: Structure of respondents by gender

Source: created by the authors

The largest group of respondents had completed Secondary education with a school-leaving exam / High school diploma (336), followed by those with a Bachelor's degree (1st level university degree) (148); together, these two groups represented 84% of the sample. Smaller shares were recorded for respondents with a Master's degree (2nd level university degree) (30), a Doctoral degree or higher (3rd level university degree or higher) (24), Primary education / Elementary school (20), and Secondary education without school-leaving exam / High school without diploma (14). Post-secondary vocational education / Higher vocational education was reported by 3 respondents, while 2 selected others (docent, higher bachelor studies). Structure of respondents by highest level of education attained can be seen in Figure 2).

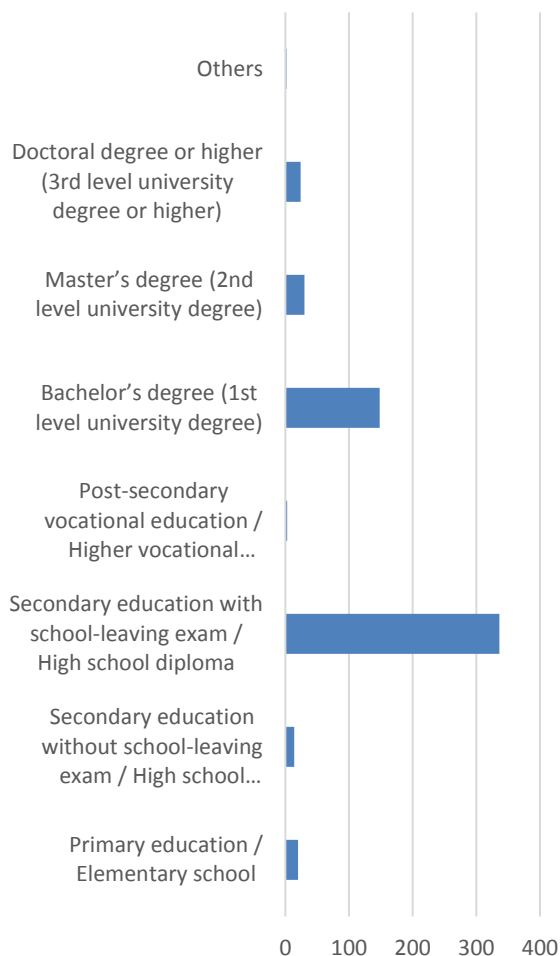


Fig. 2: Structure of respondents by highest level of education attained

Source: created by the authors

The next question examined whether respondents were familiar with the term fast fashion. A total of 489 respondents (85%) had heard of it, 77 had not, and 11 were unsure (see Figure 3).

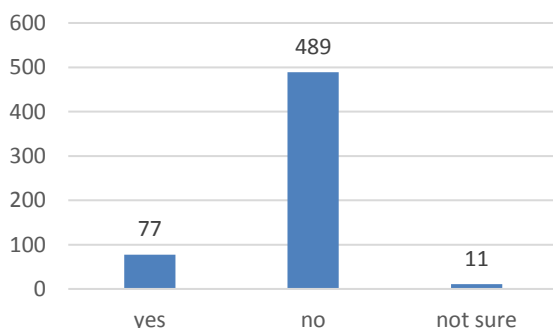


Fig. 3: Respondents' awareness of fast fashion

Source: created by the authors

The following question examined whether respondents purchase fast fashion. A total of 357

respondents (62%) stated that they buy from this fashion segment, 178 (31%) reported that they do not, and 42 (7%) were unsure. These results may indicate that fast fashion remains a common part of consumer behaviour for a substantial proportion of respondents. Respondents' attitudes towards fast fashion were then assessed on a scale from 1 (very positive) to 5 (very negative). The results suggest a predominantly neutral to rather negative attitude, as 325 respondents reported a neutral attitude, which may indicate that they do not hold a clear opinion on the issue. A rather negative attitude was reported by 139 respondents and a very negative one by 26, which may point to a certain awareness of the negative impacts of fast fashion. Positive attitudes were less represented, with 65 respondents indicating a rather positive attitude and 22 a very positive one. The results can be seen in Figure 4.

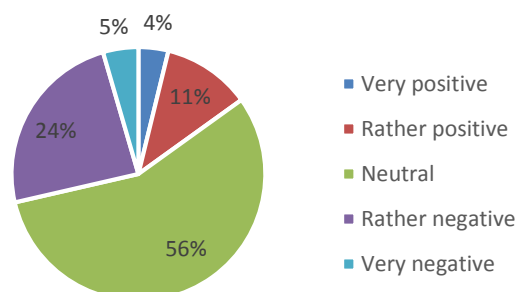


Fig. 4: Respondents' attitudes towards fast fashion

Source: created by the authors

3.1 Perceived Social Impacts of FF

The final major question examined the extent to which respondents perceive the negative social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with fast fashion. This question was divided into 18 subcategories and used a five-point scale, where 1 indicated very strong perception, and 5 indicated no perception at all. The first subcategory concerned child labour. Thirty-two percent of respondents stated that they perceive this factor moderately, while 54% perceived it strongly or very strongly. Only 14% reported that they perceive child labour very little or not at all. These findings may suggest that respondents reflect, to some extent, the negative social consequences associated with fast fashion production. The next subcategory concerned human rights violations. Altogether, 341 respondents stated that they perceive this factor strongly or very strongly. The next 157 respondents held a moderate position. In total, 79 respondents reported that they perceive human rights violations very little or not at all. Another social issue concerned health risks associated with garment production, especially in developing

countries. Again, 341 respondents indicated that they perceive this factor strongly or very strongly. This result may suggest a relatively high perception of less visible consequences of the apparel industry, including workers' health, material toxicity, and sustainability concerns. A neutral position was adopted by 165 respondents, while 71 reported very little or no perception of these risks. Employee exploitation in fast fashion production was also perceived relatively strongly. In total, 59% of respondents perceived this factor strongly or very strongly, while 29% held a neutral position and only 11% reported little or no perception. This may suggest that respondents regard employee exploitation as a relevant social issue linked to fast fashion. The expansion of a consumerist lifestyle represented another social subcategory. The largest group of respondents (190) reported a moderate perception of this factor, while 308 perceived it strongly or very strongly. Only 13 respondents stated that they perceive this trend very little or not at all. These findings may indicate that respondents perceive a link between fast fashion and consumer-oriented lifestyles. The emergence of shopping addiction related to fast fashion was also examined. The largest number of respondents (181) reported a moderate perception, whereas 292 perceived this factor strongly or very strongly. By contrast, 104 respondents stated that they perceive it very little or not at all. These responses reflect a certain level of awareness among respondents of the psychological and social consequences of fast fashion consumption. The loss of domestic culture and adaptation to global trends represented another social dimension. In this case, 213 respondents adopted a neutral position, 241 reported a strong or very strong perception of this factor, while 123 perceived it very little or not at all. The distribution of responses shows that cultural homogenisation associated with globalised fashion trends was perceived by a notable proportion of respondents.

3.2 Perceived Economic Impacts of FF

Support for large fashion chains was described in the survey as one of the key elements of the fast fashion system. The results showed that 201 respondents (35%) perceived this factor neutrally, while 48% perceived it strongly or very strongly. Only 18% reported very little or no perception. Another subcategory concerned pressure for constant innovation and short delivery cycles. The results showed that 34% of respondents adopted a moderate position, while 49% perceived this factor strongly or very strongly. Only 16% reported that they perceive this pressure very little or not at all. Low employee

wages in fast fashion were among the most strongly perceived economic-ethical issues. In total, 63% of respondents stated that they perceived them strongly or very strongly, 25% moderately, and only 11% very little or not at all. This distribution shows that insufficient compensation in producing countries was regarded as a relevant issue by a substantial proportion of respondents. Reducing production costs through speed and expenditure minimisation across the supply chain was perceived strongly or very strongly by 47% of respondents, while 38% perceived it moderately. Only 15% reported very little or no perception. These responses show that respondents associated the affordability of fast fashion with certain sustainability trade-offs.

Job instability in the fast fashion sector also emerged as a notable issue. It was perceived strongly or very strongly by 259 respondents, while 217 adopted a neutral position and 101 reported very little or no perception. The distribution of responses shows that labour insecurity was perceived as a relevant consequence of fast fashion by a considerable part of the sample, although the relatively high number of neutral responses also points to scope for further awareness-raising in this area.

3.3 Perceived Environmental Impacts of FF

The final group of subcategories focused on environmental impacts. This model places pressure on the environment mainly through high consumption of water, energy, and raw materials, as well as transport and waste-generating production patterns. Water and energy consumption were perceived strongly or very strongly by 53% of respondents, a further 31% perceived this issue moderately, and only 17% reported very little or no perception. This result may indicate a relatively strong perception of the resource intensity of textile production. Water pollution associated with fast fashion production was perceived strongly or very strongly by 59% of respondents, 26% perceived it moderately, and 15% reported very little or no perception. In the interpretation, this issue is linked mainly to toxic dyes, chemical finishing, and the release of microplastics from synthetic fibres. The generation of large amounts of textile waste was among the most strongly perceived environmental problems. Altogether, 65% of respondents perceived this issue strongly or very strongly, 21% moderately, and only 15% very little or not at all. Greenhouse-gas emissions associated with fast fashion were perceived strongly or very strongly by 47% of respondents, while 33% evaluated this factor as moderately significant. Only 19% reported very little or no perception. This result may be related to the perceived role of synthetic materials, fossil-fuel-based energy,

and transport in global supply chains. Excessive use of natural resources was perceived strongly or very strongly by 321 respondents, 161 perceived it moderately, and 95 reported very little or no perception. This pattern of responses reflects the importance respondents attribute to resource depletion as one of the major environmental consequences of fast fashion. A rising carbon footprint was perceived strongly or very strongly by 320 respondents, a further 162 perceived it moderately, and 95 reported very little or no perception. Overall, the environmental findings point to a relatively strong perception of the ecological costs associated with fast fashion production and consumption among respondents.

Hypotheses and Statistical Verification

Descriptive findings were complemented by inferential testing to verify selected theoretically grounded relationships. One-way ANOVA results and key Tukey HSD contrasts for H1 and H2 are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Textile waste perception by awareness group (H1)

Group (awareness of FF)	n		Mean	SD
Yes	489		2.117	1.147
Do not know	11		3.273	1.191
No	77		2.818	1.200
Test	Value	p-value	η^2	Key Tukey contrast
One-way ANOVA	F (2,574) = 16.819	< 0.001	0.055	Yes vs No: MD = -0.702, p < 0.001

Source: created by the authors (IBM SPSS Statistics)

A statistically significant group difference was confirmed, $F(2,574) = 16.819$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.055$. Respondents who know about fast fashion reported a stronger awareness of textile waste ($M = 2.117$) than respondents unaware of this concept ($M = 2.818$). Tukey's HSD showed a significant difference between these groups ($MD = -0.702$, 95% CI [-1.034, -0.369]), with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.61$). H1 was supported because a lower score indicates stronger perceived impacts.

Table 2. Attitude toward fast fashion by buying group (H2)

Group (n=2)				
Group (buying FF)	n		Mean attitude	SD
Yes	357		2.997	0.774
Do not know	42		3.214	0.470
No	178		3.416	0.893
Test	Value	P-value	η^2	Key Tukey contrast
One-way ANOVA	F (2,574) = 16.623	< 0.001	0.055	Yes vs No: MD = -0.419, p < 0.001

Source: created by the authors (IBM SPSS Statistics)

A statistically significant difference was also found for attitudes toward fast fashion, $F(2,574) = 16.623$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.055$. Respondents who buy fast fashion had a lower mean attitude score ($M = 2.997$) than respondents who did not buy fast fashion ($M = 3.416$). It can indicate a more positive or less negative opinion. Tukey's HSD, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0$), confirmed a significant difference between buyers and non-buyers ($MD = -0.419$, 95% CI [-0.590, -0.247]). Thus, H2 was supported. A supplementary difference also emerged for the statement "I buy fashion that I know I do not need" (buyers: $M = 3.527$; non-buyers: $M = 3.938$; $F(2, 574) = 8.635$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.029$), suggesting a link between fast fashion consumption and overconsumption tendencies.

3.4 Measurement scales – reliability and dimensionality

Before the multivariate analyses, the measurement properties of the three Likert batteries were confirmed. Internal consistency ranged from acceptable to excellent for all scales (see Table 3). The 18-item concern battery was highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.953$), as were the environmental ($\alpha = 0.942$), ethical ($\alpha = 0.915$), and socio-cultural ($\alpha = 0.889$) subscales, while the importance ($\alpha = 0.772$) and buying ($\alpha = 0.785$) batteries were at acceptable reliability. Three economic items of the buying battery (purchasing at sale prices, purchasing only within one's budget, and purchasing only when something is missing) were not in accordance with the impulsive-buying construct as indicated by the corrected item-total correlations. Thus, these items were treated as a separate dimension.

Table 3. Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of the measurement scales

Scale/subscale	Items	α	95% CI
Attribute importance	13	0.772	[0.743, 0.798]
Concerns – total	18	0.953	[0.947, 0.958]
Environmental concern	6	0.942	[0.935, 0.949]
Ethical / human-rights concern	4	0.915	[0.903, 0.925]
Socio-cultural concern	7	0.889	[0.875, 0.903]
Buying behaviour	14	0.785	[0.758, 0.810]

Source: created by the authors (IBM SPSS Statistics)

The results of exploratory factor analysis indicated a clear multidimensional structure. Sampling adequacy was good to excellent (KMO for concern battery = 0.95; KMO for importance = 0.83; KMO for buying = 0.85; all Bartlett's tests $p < 0.001$). The 18 concern items loaded onto three correlated factors – environmental, ethical/human-rights, and socio-cultural – that explained 71.2% of the variance and reflected the thematic structure that was used in the descriptive analysis (Sections 3.1–3.3). Confirmatory factor analysis supported this three-factor solution with a good fit (CFI = 0.914, TLI = 0.899, RMSEA = 0.101), although the RMSEA value indicates that the model is adequate but could be improved, which is a measurement limitation.

3.5 Robustness of the Hypothesis Tests

Since the results based on the Likert scale were not normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk test: $p < 0.001$) and the attitude variable did not meet the assumption of homogeneity of variances (Levene test: $p < 0.001$ for H2), both hypotheses were retested using robust and non-parametric methods (see Table 4). For H1, the Welch test ($F = 15.44$; $p < 0.001$) and the Kruskal–Wallis test ($H = 32.52$; $p < 0.001$) confirmed that respondents familiar with fast fashion perceived the problem of textile waste more intensely. The Games–Howell contrast between respondents who were and were not familiar with fast fashion also remained statistically significant (mean difference = -0.702 ; $p < 0.001$). For H2, the Welch test ($F = 14.97$; $p < 0.001$), the Kruskal–Wallis test ($H = 27.33$; $p < 0.001$), and the Games–Howell contrast accounting for inequality of variances (mean difference = -0.419 ; $p < 0.001$) also supported the finding that buyers had less negative attitudes compared to non-buyers. Thus, both hypotheses were supported even when using tests that did not require the original assumptions to be met,

thus strengthening the conclusions of the original ANOVA analysis.

Table 4. Assumption tests and robust re-analysis of H1 and H2

Hypot thesis test	Shap iro p	Lev ene p	ANO VA F (p)	Welc h F (p)	Krus kal– Walli s H (p)	η^2
H1: textile waste × aware ness	< .001	.727	16.8 2 ($<.001$)	15.4 4 ($<.001$)	32.5 2 ($<.001$)	.0 55
H2: attitude × buying	< .001	< .001	16.6 2 ($<.001$)	14.9 7 ($<.001$)	27.3 3 ($<.001$)	.0 55

Source: created by the authors (IBM SPSS Statistics)

3.6 Multivariate Analysis: Regression, Mediation, and Consumer Segmentation

A multiple linear regression was estimated (see Table 5) to determine the joint determinants of attitudes. The model was statistically significant and explained 12% of the variability in attitudes towards fast fashion ($R^2 = 0.118$; $F(8, 568) = 9.48$; $p < 0.001$). More negative attitudes towards fast fashion were associated with higher levels of environmental concern ($b = -0.137$; $p = 0.006$). Conversely, more positive or less negative attitudes were associated with greater importance attributed to the functional properties of products ($b = 0.148$; $p = 0.004$) and with stronger tendencies towards impulsive buying ($b = 0.214$; $p < 0.001$). It should be noted that these are associations within a cross-sectional design and do not determine causal relationships.

Table 5. Multiple regression – predictors of attitude toward fast fashion (N = 577) Model $R^2 = 0.118$; $F(8, 568) = 9.48$; $p < 0.001$.

Predictor	b	p
Environmental concern	-0.137	0.006
Ethical / human-rights concern	-0.067	0.187
Socio-cultural concern	-0.045	0.403
Functional importance	+0.148	0.004
Impulsive buying	+0.214	< 0.001
Age	-0.007	0.095
Gender (female vs. male)	-0.108	0.159

Source: created by the authors (IBM SPSS Statistics)

Further mediation analysis indicated that environmental concern was not directly related to impulsive buying (total effect = -0.005 , $p = 0.87$), but a significant indirect path was found via attitude

(indirect effect = -0.033 , bias-corrected bootstrap CI not including zero), such that higher levels of environmental concern were associated with a less favourable attitude towards fast fashion, which was in turn related to lower impulsive buying. This indirect-only pattern suggests that the relation between environmental concern and purchasing behaviour is mediated rather than direct – a structure that the original one-way ANOVA was not able to capture. Mediation is seen as a statistical decomposition of associations, rather than evidence of a causal mechanism.

Finally, a k-means segmentation exploration of the standardised composite scores resulted in three consumer segments. The first segment ($n = 214$) scored above average on all three concern dimensions, and can be characterized as highly concerned consumers, but reported slightly below average impulsive buying. The second segment ($n = 171$) scored below average on both concern and buying and thus represented a low-involvement group. The third segment ($n = 192$), which represented image-driven buyers, was characterised by the highest impulsive-buying scores but below-average concern. The difference between the very concerned and image-oriented segments suggests that great concern about fast fashion and impulsive buying are not necessarily linked, and this is in line with the attitude-behaviour gap identified above.

4 Conclusion and discussion

The results of the questionnaire indicated that respondents knew about the concept of fast fashion and could identify its negative consequences. From the fast fashion concept point of view, the respondents considered the strongest environmental issues, especially textile waste, water pollution, water and energy consumption, excessive use of natural resources, and carbon-related impacts, and social issues, particularly child labour, human rights violations, health risks, and employee exploitation. By contrast, cultural and some economic aspects were more often evaluated neutrally, which may indicate that these dimensions are less visible or less clearly interpreted by consumers. These findings are broadly consistent with previous research showing that consumers tend to recognise the environmental burden of the fashion industry more readily than its more complex social and structural effects. The additional multivariate analyses support these conclusions. The robustness checks confirmed both hypotheses under variance-robust (Welch) and non-parametric (Kruskal–Wallis) tests, indicating that the differences observed are not artefacts of the

distributional assumptions of ANOVA. Reliability and factor analyses indicated that respondents differentiated three consistent and internally coherent concern dimensions—environmental, ethical/human rights, and socio-cultural—which supports the separate interpretation of these factors of fast fashion, rather than as a single undifferentiated attitude. The regression and mediation results nuance the attitude–behaviour gap. A more critical attitude toward fast fashion was associated with stronger environmental concern, but with weaker rather than stronger restraint in purchasing. Impulsive-buying tendencies and the importance attached to functional product attributes were linked to a more favourable attitude. The mediation analysis further indicated that environmental concern was related to lower impulsive buying only indirectly, through a less favourable attitude, rather than directly. The gap was made tangible by segmentation of consumers: a significant image-driven segment coupled the highest impulsive buying scores with below-average concern. Overall, these findings support the main message that consciousness and concern about fast fashion do not necessarily lead to more moderated consumption; however, given the cross-sectional design, these relationships should be interpreted as correlational rather than causal. Earlier studies have identified waste generation, resource use, and pollution as among the most salient sustainability concerns in fashion consumption, even when this awareness does not necessarily translate into more sustainable behaviour [1], [2], [41], [42], [47]. Research on circular and sustainable fashion also suggests that higher awareness is often associated with more critical evaluations of conventional fashion consumption and greater openness to sustainable alternatives, although this relationship is moderated by barriers such as price, convenience, and trust [37], [44], [46], [47]. Inferential analysis showed that respondents who were aware of the concept of fast fashion perceived the environmental burden of textile waste more strongly than those who were not. This supports the assumption that conceptual familiarity with fast fashion may be associated with stronger recognition of its environmental consequences, which is in line with previous research linking sustainability knowledge with more critical consumer evaluations [37], [41], [46]. However, the second hypothesis showed that respondents who buy fast fashion have a less negative attitude toward it than non-buyers. This corresponds to the literature describing an attitude–behaviour gap, in which consumers can recognise sustainability problems while continuing to purchase fast fashion because of affordability, habit, social influence, or limited access to alternatives [24], [32],

[41], [47], [48]. The complementary result related to the statement “I buy fashion that I know I do not need” suggests that fast fashion consumption may be associated with stronger overconsumption tendencies, which points in a similar direction. It corresponds with recent research indicating that continuous awareness of current trends, social media influence, and the perception of repeat purchases as inexpensive can contribute to excessive clothing consumption, especially among younger consumers [43], [49]. Overall, the study suggests that respondents can identify both environmental and social costs of fast fashion, but that awareness and consumer behaviour do not necessarily move in the same direction. This supports the view that sustainable fashion consumption is formed not only by information and attitudes, but also by structural limitations and everyday purchasing habits. From a practical point of view, the findings show that raising awareness remains important, but can be more effective when combined with clearer sustainability communication and wider access to financially accessible sustainable alternatives [16], [27], [28], [47].

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technologies solely for the purpose of linguistic refinement and grammatical correction. Following the application of these tools, the author(s) comprehensively reviewed, verified, and edited the resulting text. The author(s) maintain full accountability and responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the publication.

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Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)

Dominika Čeryová was responsible for the chapters Problem Formulation, Problem Solution, Conclusion, and for the formal editing of the paper.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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