



Understanding Generation Z's Willingness to Pay for Sustainable Fashion: Personal and Corporate Drivers

Determinantes de la disposición a pagar por moda sostenible en la Generación Z: factores personales y empresariales

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the sustainable fashion purchasing behavior of Generation Z by identifying both personal and corporate factors that could enhance the intention to buy and pay a premium price for sustainable clothing. In addition, it explores the potential moderating role of fashion consciousness in the relationship between willingness to pay a premium price and purchase behavior. The research employs a survey-based approach followed by a PLS-SEM analysis to examine the key factors influencing sustainable fashion purchasing behavior. The results indicate that altruism, consumer knowledge, and corporate social responsibility drive the willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion, which, in turn, predicts purchase behavior among young consumers. These findings highlight the importance of both individual values and corporate practices in shaping consumer decisions in this context. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the psychological and corporate drivers of sustainable fashion adoption among Generation Z, contributing to the existing literature on sustainable consumption and consumer behavior. Furthermore these findings are expected to help boost sustainable fashion consumption by offering relevant practical implications for brands, enabling them to better align with consumer values and build stronger, more stable relationships with potential customers, while encouraging more responsible and conscious consumption patterns.

Keywords: Sustainable fashion; Fashion consciousness; Altruism; Consumer knowledge; Corporate social responsibility.

R E S U M E N

Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar el comportamiento de compra de moda sostenible de la Generación Z mediante la identificación de factores personales y corporativos que podrían potenciar la intención de compra y la disposición a pagar un precio superior por prendas sostenibles. Asimismo, analiza el posible papel moderador de la conciencia de moda en la relación entre la disposición a pagar un precio superior y el comportamiento de compra. La investigación emplea un enfoque basado en encuestas, seguido de un análisis PLS-SEM, para examinar factores clave que influyen en el comportamiento de compra de moda sostenible. Los resultados indican que el altruismo, el conocimiento del consumidor y la responsabilidad social corporativa impulsan la disposición a pagar más por la moda sostenible, que, a su vez, predice el comportamiento de compra entre los consumidores jóvenes. Estos hallazgos ponen de relieve la importancia tanto de los valores individuales como de las prácticas empresariales en la configuración de las decisiones de los consumidores. Este estudio aporta valiosas contribuciones sobre los factores psicológicos y corporativos que impulsan la adopción de la moda sostenible entre la Generación Z, contribuyendo a la literatura existente sobre consumo sostenible y comportamiento del consumidor. Asimismo, se espera que estos resultados contribuyan a impulsar el consumo de moda sostenible al ofrecer implicaciones prácticas relevantes para las marcas, permitiéndoles alinearse mejor con los valores de los consumidores y construir relaciones más sólidas y estables con sus clientes potenciales, al tiempo que fomentan patrones de consumo más responsables y conscientes.

Palabras clave: Moda sostenible; Conciencia de la moda; Altruismo; Conocimiento; Responsabilidad social corporativa.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations, the textile industry is one of the most polluting industries worldwide. It is estimated to account for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions and nearly 20% of worldwide drinking water pollution. Despite these alarming figures, fashion consumption continues to grow, driven largely by fast fashion business models and sustained consumer demand (McKinsey, 2024). Global textile fiber production has grown exponentially since the early 2000s, while less than 1% of discarded clothing is recycled into new items (European Parliament, 2024). Given that most textile fibers are not biodegradable, it is estimated that nearly three-fifths of all fashion products ultimately end up in landfills (National Geographic, 2023).

In this context, sustainability is emerging as a central strategic challenge for the fashion industry. Increasingly strict environmental regulations and social pressure require brands to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste, and improve labor conditions across their value chains (McKinsey, 2024). At the same time, consumers are becoming more aware of environmental and social issues and increasingly expect brands to behave responsibly (Brandão & Costa, 2021; Vehmas et al., 2018). As a response, sustainable fashion, defined as fashion products and practices that integrate environmental and social sustainability principles providing a balanced approach to both fashion consumption and production (Goworek et al., 2012), has been positioned as a potential solution to address issues such as pollution, resource depletion, unfair labor practices, and unethical production systems (Busalim et al., 2022).

From a generational perspective, Generation Z represents a particularly relevant segment for the future of sustainable fashion (Dragolea et al., 2023). This group is widely characterized by strong social and environmental awareness, a pronounced sensitivity to ethical issues, and a high level of engagement with sustainability-related causes (Carnegie, 2022; Vladimirova et al., 2024). Previous research suggests that Generation Z consumers are more likely than older cohorts to express favorable attitudes towards sustainable consumption and to support brands that align with their values (Observatorio Cetelem, 2023). However, despite this apparent alignment between values and attitudes, actual sustainable purchasing behavior remains inconsistent. Indeed, a persistent attitude-behavior gap has been documented in the sustainable fashion literature (ElHaffar et al., 2020; Park & Lin, 2020). While consumers frequently express positive attitudes towards sustainable clothing, these oftentimes do not translate into actual purchase decisions.

Prior studies have identified several barriers that help explain this discrepancy, including limited brand transparency, perceived lack of aesthetic appeal, and concerns regarding style and trendiness (Achabou et al., 2020; Behre & Cauberghe, 2024). Another major challenge facing sustainable fashion is the perception that its prices are higher than those of conventional fashion. This perception, combined with young consumers' limited willingness to pay a price premium (Blas Riesgo et al., 2023; Brandão & Costa, 2021), creates a negative trade-off that places sustainable fashion at a competitive disadvantage.

Existing research has not sufficiently clarified which individual and corporate-level factors drive consumers to be willing

to pay a price premium for environmentally friendly fashion, nor how these factors ultimately translate into purchase behavior, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Moreover, prior studies tend to examine personal traits, corporate social responsibility, or brand-related variables in isolation, leaving a fragmented understanding of how these elements jointly shape consumers' willingness to pay and purchasing decisions in the context of sustainable fashion.

In response to this gap, this study aims to examine the individual and firm-level factors influencing Generation Z consumers' willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion and how this willingness translates into purchase behavior, moderated by fashion consciousness.

Based on this objective, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do individual factors (e.g., altruism and consumer knowledge) and firm-level factors (e.g., corporate social responsibility and brand reputation) influence Generation Z consumers' willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion products?

RQ2. Does willingness to pay a premium for sustainable fashion translate into purchase behavior among Generation Z consumers, and is this relationship moderated by fashion consciousness?

Altruism refers to a selfless concern for the welfare of others and has been shown to influence ethical and pro-social consumption decisions (Farzin et al., 2023). Consumers with higher levels of altruism are more likely to consider the broader social and environmental consequences of their fashion purchases. Sustainability awareness, closely linked to consumer knowledge and familiarity with sustainability issues, also plays a crucial role in shaping sustainable consumption patterns. People who are aware of the fashion industry's environmental impact are more likely to adopt sustainable purchasing behaviors, including reducing overall consumption and supporting or purchasing environmentally friendly brands (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Beyond individual traits, corporate-level perceptions play a critical role in sustainable fashion consumption. Corporate social responsibility can be defined as the deliberate allocation of corporate resources to promote social welfare and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders (Barnett, 2007). From a marketing perspective, CSR communication contributes to corporate differentiation, credibility, and competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Öbersender et al., 2013). Similarly, brand reputation, meaning reflecting consumers' overall evaluations of a company's past and present actions (Fombrun et al., 2000), has been shown to directly influence purchase intentions (Faircloth et al., 2001). For sustainability-oriented consumers, the alignment between a brand's identity, reputation, and sustainability claims becomes especially critical.

Finally, this study also examines the moderating role of fashion consciousness in the relationship between willingness to pay and sustainable fashion purchase behavior. Sustainable fashion is still frequently perceived as less trendy, less stylish, and more limited in design options compared to conventional fashion offerings (Behre & Cauberghe, 2024). Understanding whether fashion consciousness strengthens or weakens the translation of willingness to pay into actual purchase behavior among Generation Z consumers therefore represents an important and underexplored research question.

Overall, this study contributes to the sustainable fashion literature by offering an integrated framework that combines individual values and corporate perceptions to explain both willingness to pay and purchase behavior among Generation Z consumers, with a specific focus on the Spanish context. By clarifying these relationships, the findings aim to provide actionable insights for fashion brands seeking to promote sustainable consumption while remaining economically viable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Consumers increasingly express concern for sustainability and responsible consumption; however, this concern frequently fails to translate into actual purchasing behavior, particularly in the fashion domain (Gálvez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2024; McNeill & Moore, 2015).

In the literature, sustainable fashion refers to the variety of ways by which a fashion item could be perceived to be more sustainable because it is related to environmental, social, slow fashion, reuse, recycling, upcycling and cruelty-free production practices (Mukendi *et al.*, 2020; Park & Lin, 2020). Building on previous research, the present study explores the role of altruism, consumer knowledge, brand reputation and corporate social responsibility as factors that might shed further light on what has been called the “ethical purchasing gap” (Nicholls & Lee, 2006)

2.1. Altruism

Prior research has identified several personal factors, such as perceived risk, environmental concern, subjective norms, and perceived consumer effectiveness (i.e., the extent to which consumers believe their individual actions can positively impact the environment), as predictors of purchase intention in the sustainable fashion context (Park & Lin, 2020). This study focuses on altruism based on the idea that purchasing sustainable fashion can be considered an altruistic behavior, as it produces future-oriented benefits that contribute to the well-being of society as a whole (Reimers *et al.*, 2017).

Altruistic behavior “is influenced by the intensity of moral (personal) obligation which an individual feels to take specific helping actions” (Schwartz, 1977, p. 227) and it involves benefiting others without expecting something in return (Buil *et al.*, 2024). Altruism is one of the most significant qualities of Generation Z (Dabija *et al.*, 2019), which includes those born between 1996 and 2011 (Lanier, 2017). Also, for Generation Z, altruism is higher than in other generational groups (Lee *et al.*, 2022).

This quality is related to self-actualisation, which leads individuals to develop their full potential and achieve the idea of the ideal self (Palomo-Domínguez *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, the altruistic value is one of the most relevant psychographic variables to explain consumers’ pro-environmental attitudes, as people with altruistic qualities are often more aware and concerned about environmental issues (Aydin, 2025; Wang *et al.*, 2020). Although it has not been extensively researched, altruism has been shown to boost positive attitudes and purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion, especially when compared with the well-established construct of environmental concerns (Farzin *et al.*, 2023).

Therefore, it is expected that altruism can have a positive impact on the willingness to pay a premium price for sustainable fashion garments. Consequently, it is proposed:

H₁: Altruism is positively related to willingness to pay a higher price

2.2. Consumer knowledge

Consumer knowledge is related to familiarity, understood in terms of previous consumption experiences, and product knowledge, which refers to information about a product stored in memory (Philippe & Ngobo, 1999).

Consumer knowledge is a key factor behind the frequent mismatch between what individuals say they value and what they actually purchase (Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018). Research indicates that many consumers have only a partial understanding of sustainable fashion, both regarding which sustainable options are available and how fashion choices affect environmental and social outcomes (Busalim *et al.*, 2022). Kong *et al.* (2016) found that consumer knowledge plays an important role in forming attitudes toward sustainable fashion products. It has been shown that increased awareness of sustainability issues has an impact on purchasing decisions for products such as food, technology and fashion (Han *et al.*, 2024; Maichum *et al.*, 2016). Greater consumer knowledge in this domain attenuates the attitude-intention-purchase behavior gap. The more information and education the consumer receives about sustainability in fashion, the more it will influence their actual behavior and intention to buy sustainable products (Blazquez *et al.*, 2020). This not only leads them to be more willing to buy this type of garment, but also favors the intention to pay a higher price (El-Deeb *et al.*, 2023), as consumers motivated by pro-environmental attitudes are more likely to pay more for environmentally friendly goods (Ojea & Loureiro, 2007; Lusk *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore, it is proposed:

H₂: Consumer knowledge of sustainable fashion is positively related to willingness to pay a higher price

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is defined as “the voluntary allocation of corporate resources to enhance social well-being, serving as a mechanism to foster positive relationships with key stakeholders” (Barnett, 2007, p. 801). CSR allows firms to take responsibility for the economic, social, and environmental consequences of their operations by adopting initiatives such as environmental management systems (Farmaki, 2022). This not only promotes more responsible practices but can also lead to long-term competitive advantage (Margolis *et al.*, 2009) and to a positive effect on the financial results of organizations (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020).

CSR initiatives are often embedded within a company’s strategic intent, serving to differentiate the firm, enhance reputational capital, and secure stakeholder support (Porter & Kramer, 2006). They should be aligned with the company’s brand promise and supporting core values, which are at the heart of the corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013). CSR activities have a positive influ-

ence on consumers' perception of companies, which could favor their purchase intention, as they make consumers feel proud of the company's ability to carry out socially responsible activities (Narayanan & Singh, 2023). For example, in the context of organic products, the product type (organic) serves as a vehicle to develop a positive perception of CSR activities, which ultimately leads to a positive purchase intention (Jabeen *et al.*, 2023).

Consumers' perceptions of fast fashion brands' corporate social responsibility efforts influence both their purchase intentions and the perceived value of the brand (Mickelsson *et al.*, 2023). Previous literature has shown that consumers who have a positive perception of corporate social responsibility are willing to pay a higher price (Becchetti *et al.*, 2020; Narayanan & Singh, 2023). In the fashion industry specifically, Gálvez-Sánchez *et al.* (2024) demonstrate that CSR positively affects willingness to pay. In the same way, it is to be expected that consumers who perceive corporate social responsibility practices in a positive way will be willing to pay a premium price for sustainable fashion products.

Consequently, H_3 is proposed as follows:

H_3 : Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is positively related to willingness to pay a higher price.

2.4. Brand reputation

While brand identity is always an expression of strategic intent, brand reputation is primarily externally rooted (Davies & Chun, 2003). Fombrun and van Riel (1997) define reputation as the associations that individuals make with a company's actions and past performance that provide insight into the company's ability to meet the needs of different stakeholders.

Developing brand reputation is not a quick or simple process, as it is built through solid communication campaigns as well as continuously exceeding customer expectations by offering high quality services or products (Moreno-Domínguez *et al.*, 2022; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Brand reputation conveys information about intrinsic and intangible characteristics such as quality, especially when there is no previous experience or other means of evaluating them (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, it facilitates the purchasing process by reducing the time spent searching for information (Maden *et al.*, 2012). It often influences customers' perception of value and trust, affecting their willingness to spend more (Yaghi, S. 2024).

For example, Ecoalf, a Spanish eco-fashion brand, is widely praised for its commitment to sustainability by using recycled materials and promoting circular fashion. On the other end, ultra-fast fashion brands such as Shein face harsh criticism due to a lack of transparency and environmental impact, among other factors. These contrasting approaches strongly shape and influence each brand's overall reputation and perceived credibility in the fashion industry.

Whereas sustainable clothing is often considered less attractive than conventional fashion (Achabou *et al.*, 2020), it is expected that the reputation of the brand can have a positive impact by favoring that consumers are willing to pay a higher price.

H_4 : Brand reputation fashion is positively related to willingness to pay a higher price.

2.5. Willingness to pay a higher price

One of the main barriers that sustainable products generally encounter is that consumers perceive the price higher than conventional alternatives (Ayadi & Lapeyre, 2016). This perception often outweighs other potential benefits. In the fashion industry, where customers oftentimes make purchase decisions based on price and design, hence prioritizing fashion over sustainability, this is a particularly relevant question.

However, Generation Z consumers show a greater willingness to purchase sustainable clothing and are more likely to pay more for sustainable products or services than Generation X or Baby Boomers (Observatorio Cetelem, 2023). Fei *et al.* (2024) found that Generation Z consumers are willing to pay more if the company adopts responsible environmental behaviors. In fact, the idea that guides this research is that willingness to pay more might serve as a key indicator of consumer commitment to sustainable consumption practices.

Therefore, following studies that conclude that consumers who hold pro-environmental attitudes are willing to pay price premiums for eco-friendly products (Park & Lin, 2020), and that when consumers understand the value and long-term benefits of sustainable products, they are more likely to accept the price difference (Becchetti *et al.*, 2020; Haws *et al.*, 2014), we hypothesize that:

H_5 : The willingness to pay a higher price fashion is positively related to sustainable fashion purchase behavior.

2.6. Fashion consciousness

Fashion consciousness refers to a person's degree of involvement with design, fashion of clothing and in one's appearance, which often includes the desire for up-to-date styles, frequent changes in one's wardrobe and pleasurable shopping experiences, influencing their decision-making (Nam *et al.*, 2007, p. 103). Consumers with a higher level of awareness perceive buying clothes as a pleasurable experience and tend to have several options to choose those garments that follow fashion trends that best reflect their perceived self-concept (Hassan & Harun, 2016; Zhang & Wang, 2023). Drawing on McNeill and Moore (2015), fashion consumers can be broadly distinguished according to the motivations that guide their clothing choices, ranging from hedonic self-oriented motives to concerns about social image and, ultimately, to more ethically driven considerations. In this sense, fashion consciousness is not a uniform construct, but rather encompasses different consumer orientations that vary in the extent to which style, status, or societal impact shape sustainable fashion decisions.

Despite the importance that consumers may give to environmental or social problems, when it comes to shopping, those who are more concerned about fashion prefer products that better express their style over other variables (Zhang & Wang, 2023). Oftentimes, sustainable fashion garments are perceived as less attractive, out of style and even of worse quality (Han *et al.*, 2017). Hence, and despite being willing to pay a higher price, if a person is highly interested in fashion, the intention to buy sustainable items could be compromised.

The moderating effect of fashion consciousness has been previously proven in the literature (Zhang & Wang, 2023). Even more so, in the context of sustainable fashion Mishra *et al.* (2021) showed that fashion consciousness moderates the relationship between psychological ownership and sustainable consumption behavior. Based on the abovementioned, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆: Fashion consciousness moderates the relationship between willingness to pay more and purchase behaviour

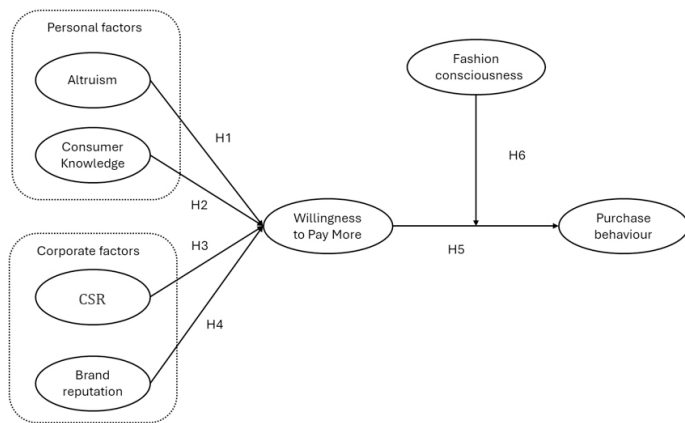


Figure 1

Proposed research model

Source: Own elaboration.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through an online questionnaire conducted in April and May of 2024 with a sample of 295 people. After eliminating responses that did not meet the control requirements, a total of 288 valid surveys remained. The data collection process followed the criteria suggested by Dörnyei (2007), such as proximity, availability, and willingness to participate in the study. Since this research focuses on a specific subgroup of the population, Gen Z individuals, convenience sampling was considered the most appropriate approach. This method was considered appropriate due to its effectiveness in obtaining a sample that allows for the generalization of results (Nicolau *et al.*, 2025; Tsiotsou, 2015). Nevertheless, given the non-probabilistic nature of the sample, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population, instead, they reflect the perceptions and behaviours of young consumers belonging to Gen Z.

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of an online questionnaire to a large group of students, ensuring both anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Participants were given a brief definition of sustainable fashion in order to ensure their understanding of the topic. They were then asked to confirm if they understood the definition.

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM 4.0) was used for the subsequent data analysis and confirmation of the proposed theoretical model. The PLS methodology over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) was selected for several reasons. First, it is particularly suitable for the analysis of smaller

sample sizes. Moreover, it is especially appropriate for research that is prediction-oriented and focused on theory development, rather than for studies aimed towards theory confirmation. Finally, its ability to handle non-normal data distributions and to produce robust results further supports its appropriateness for the present study (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Given that all data were collected using a single survey instrument, the potential presence of common method bias was assessed. To reduce any common variance problem and ensure the efficiency of the data, the Harman's single-factor test was performed. The results indicate that no single factor emerged, and the first factor accounted for 28.57% of the total variance, which is well below the 50% threshold commonly used to indicate serious common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). To assess sample size adequacy, we applied the inverse square root method for minimum sample size estimation in PLS-SEM (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). Although the inverse square root method suggests that detecting very small effects ($\beta = 0.091$) would require a larger sample, the final sample of 288 is consistent with the use of PLS-SEM. This technique is particularly suitable for studies with relatively small samples due to its variance-based estimation approach and prediction-oriented nature (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the model is expected to provide reliable estimates for medium-to-large effects, while results associated with very small effects should be interpreted with caution.

The constructs were measured on a 7-position Likert scale. More specifically, to study the personal factors that affect sustainable fashion buying behaviour, altruism was measured using 7 items originally proposed by Wei and Jung (2017), while consumer knowledge of sustainable fashion was assessed through 6 items adapted from Ho *et al.* (2020) and Preuit (2016). Purchase behaviour was measured using 4 items derived from Lee (2008) and Schlegelmilch *et al.* (1996).

To evaluate the corporate-related factors, corporate social responsibility was measured using 4 items, and brand reputation was assessed through 2 items, both based on the work of Flores Hernández *et al.* (2020). Furthermore, willingness to pay more was measured using 3 items adapted from Khan *et al.* (2024). For the moderating variable, fashion consciousness, the items used in the survey were extracted from Gould and Stern (1989) and Johnstone, and Lindh, (2022). Subsequently, a dummy variable was created to differentiate between two groups of consumers: those with high fashion consciousness and those with low fashion consciousness.

All constructs in the model were specified as reflective (Mode A), as their indicators are considered manifestations of the underlying latent variables rather than formative components.

4. RESULTS

Out of the 288 valid answers, 95% were ranked between the ages of 19 and 22 and almost equal in terms of gender (50,1% male and 49,9% female). Among the respondents, 44% have purchased sustainable fashion at least once, whereas 56% have never made such a purchase.

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

Before assessing the structural relationships, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs. For the evaluation of the measurement model, the modelling of partial least squares structural equations (PLS-SEM) was used using SmartPLS 4.0.

Most of the outer loadings exceed the recommended threshold of .7 (see Appendix). For those items that did not reach the minimum acceptable value, an additional analysis was conducted to determine whether they should be retained in or removed from the model. One item, related to brand reputation (REP2), was removed because its value was less than .4 and its exclusion significantly improved both Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Hensler *et al.*, 2009). The remaining two-item scale showed satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, consistent with prior research using parsimonious global reputation measures (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2013). For the remaining constructs, all initial items were retained.

The results of the measurement model were favorable (see table 1), since the reliability indicators (Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability) of all constructs, except brand reputation, exceeded reference thresholds of 0.80 for composite reliability and .70 for Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1979). Brand reputation has a value of .68, very close to the cut-off point of 0.7. Likewise, reliability values between 0.60 and 0.70 are considered acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Table 1
Reliability and Validity of the Scales

	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
ALT	.88	.921	.576
CK	.87	.897	.606
PB	.81	.843	.639
CSR	.89	.887	.748
REP	.68	.712	.753
WPM	.90	.898	.827

Note: CR = Composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. ALT= altruism, CK= Consumer knowledge, PB= Purchase behavior, CSR= Corporate Social Responsibility, REP= reputation, WPM= willingness to pay more

Source: Own elaboration.

Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), a value above .50 indicates that a construct explains more than 50% of the variance of its indicators (Hair *et al.*, 2017). In this study, AVE values ranged from .58 to .83, thus supporting the convergent validity of all constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed using two complementary approaches: the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) proposed by Henseler *et al.* (2015).

According to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct should be greater than its correlations with other con-

structs. As shown in Table 2, the AVE values on the diagonal are consistently higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, supporting discriminant validity.

Additionally, discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT ratio. Following Henseler *et al.* (2015), values below the recommended threshold of .90 indicate adequate discriminant validity. As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values are below this threshold.

Taken together, both tests confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs in the model.

Table 2
Discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker criteria

	ALT	CK	PB	CSR	REP	WPM
ALT	.759					
CK	.191	.778				
PB	.214	.613	.799			
CSR	.343	.192	.148	.865		
REP	.147	.090	.115	.313	.868	
WPM	.346	.447	.703	.259	.144	.909

Note: The AVE is included on the main diagonal and the inter-construct correlations to the square are shown in each column below the main diagonal. ALT= altruism, CK= Consumer knowledge, PB= Purchase behavior, CSR= Corporate Social Responsibility, REP= reputation, WPM= willingness to pay more.

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Structural Model Assessment

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated. The significance of the path coefficients was assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 iterations. The fundamental criteria for evaluating the structural model are the coefficient of significance, the level of the r^2 values, the f^2 effect size, the predictive relevance Q^2 .

Table 3 reports the explanatory power (R^2 adjusted) and predictive relevance (Q^2) of the endogenous constructs. In marketing research, R^2 values of .75, .50, and .25 for endogenous constructs are typically described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the R^2 adjusted values for willingness to pay more (.280) and purchase behaviour (.507) indicate weak and moderate explanatory power, respectively.

Predictive relevance was assessed using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 value. According to Henseler *et al.* (2009), Q^2 values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a given endogenous construct. The Q^2 values obtained for willingness to pay more (.266) and purchase behaviour (.297) are both above zero, suggesting that the model exhibits adequate predictive relevance for both constructs.

Lastly, the f^2 effect is analyzed and values of .02, .15, and .35 indicate an exogenous construct's small, medium, or large effect, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Table 4 also reports the effect sizes (f^2) of the structural relationships. According to the results, the

effects of consumer knowledge on willingness to pay more (.191) and willingness to pay more on purchase behaviour (.564) are large. While the rest of the effects, altruism on willingness to pay more (.065), CSR on willingness to pay more (.010) and brand reputation on willingness to pay more (.003), have a small size, with values below .02. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumer knowledge is the variable that has the greatest impact on willingness to pay more.

Table 3

Explanatory and predictive power of the structural model

Endogenous construct	R ² adjusted	Q ²
Willingness to pay more	.280	.266
Purchase behaviour	.507	.297

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4

Effect size (*f*²) of structural relationships

Structural relationship	<i>f</i> ²	Effect size
Consumer knowledge → Willingness to pay more	.191	Medium
Willingness to pay more → Purchase behaviour	.564	Large
Altruism → Willingness to pay more	.065	Small
CSR → Willingness to pay more	.010	Small
Brand reputation → Willingness to pay more	.003	Small

Note: Effect size (*f*²) thresholds follow Cohen, 1988 .02 (small), .15 (medium), and .35 (large).

Source: Own elaboration.

The results of the final model confirm four of the six hypotheses proposed (see figure 2). Both personal factors, altruism and consumer knowledge, have a positive and direct influence on the predisposition to pay a higher price ($\beta = .235$, $p < .001$) and ($\beta = .381$, $p < .001$) respectively, hence confirming *H*₁ and *H*₂. As for corporate factors, only CSR positively influences the predisposition to pay a higher price ($\beta = .091$, $p < .05$), confirming *H*₃. However, the results indicate that brand reputation does not influence the predisposition to pay a higher price, which leads to the rejection of *H*₄.

The lack of a significant effect of brand reputation on willingness to pay more suggests that, in the context of sustainable fashion and among Gen Z consumers, a favorable reputation is not sufficient for consumers to associate a brand with sustainable values or to justify a price premium for sustainable fashion lines. While brand reputation reflects a general evaluation of a company, it may not necessarily convey information about specific sustainability practices. In contrast, corporate social responsibility initiatives represent more tangible and value-aligned signals, which may be more significant for younger consumers who are particularly sensitive to ethical and environmental issues (Vladimirova *et al.*, 2024). This finding highlights the importance for brands to actively communicate and explain their concrete sustainability actions, particularly to differentiate sustainable fashion offerings from fast fashion alternatives.

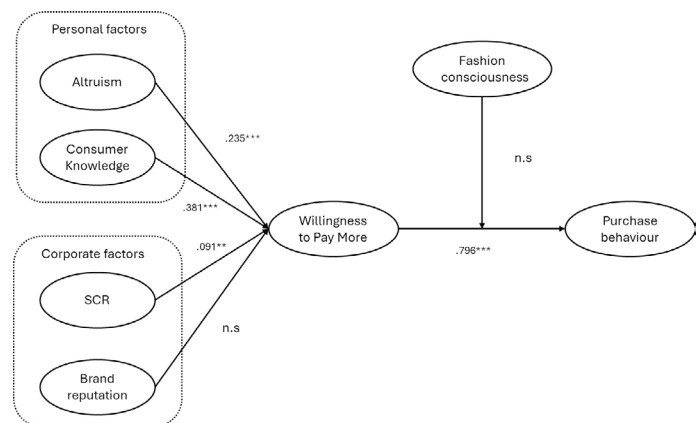


Figure 2

Results of the structural model.

Note: Reported values represent standardized path coefficients (β). *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$; n.s. = not significant. Significance levels were obtained using bootstrapping.

Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, the predisposition to pay a higher price influences sustainable purchasing behavior ($\beta = .796$, $p < .001$), confirming *H*₅, while the moderation of fashion consciousness is not significant, so *H*₆ is rejected. Therefore, the absence of a moderating effect of fashion consciousness suggests that, once consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable fashion, this willingness translates into actual purchase behavior regardless of their level of fashion involvement. This finding indicates that, among Generation Z consumers, ethical and sustainability related commitments may prevail over aesthetic considerations or fashion trends at the final stage of the purchase decision-making process. Therefore, although sustainable fashion has often been associated with aesthetic or design limitations (Achabou *et al.*, 2020; Behre & Cauberghe, 2024), the results suggest that such considerations do not necessarily act as a barrier to purchase among Generation Z consumers, even among those with higher levels of fashion involvement.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study successfully addresses a gap in the literature by identifying and exploring new personal and corporate factors that could favor the willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. The impact of two personal (altruism and consumer knowledge) and two corporate (CSR and brand reputation) variables on the predisposition to pay a higher price has been examined, as well as whether this willingness ultimately translates into actual purchasing behavior. Additionally, this study incorporates fashion consciousness as a moderating variable to provide a more nuanced and differentiated understanding of the proposed relationships.

The results reveal that both personal factors, altruism and consumer knowledge, positively and significantly predict the willingness to pay a higher price for sustainable fashion items. This indicates that consumers who possess a strong sense of social justice and responsibility are more inclined to invest in

sustainable fashion, even when this entails a price premium. In line with previous research (Busalim *et al.*, 2022; Rahman *et al.*, 2023), the findings of this study also suggest that as consumers become better informed about sustainable fashion, their knowledge can help align their attitudes with their purchasing intentions.

On the corporate side, CSR is the only variable that emerged as a significant direct antecedent of willingness to pay a higher price. This suggests that consumers are more likely to financially support fashion brands that demonstrate a genuine and credible commitment to sustainable and ethical practices. Although brand reputation showed a positive effect, it was not statistically significant, indicating that a favorable brand image alone is insufficient to motivate consumers to pay more for sustainable fashion products.

Furthermore, willingness to pay a higher price was found to directly, positively, and significantly predict sustainable fashion purchase behavior. This implies that consumers who express a readiness to pay more for sustainable products are not merely stating their values in abstract terms but are effectively translating this disposition into concrete purchasing decisions.

Prior research has shown that fashion consciousness can moderate, within the sustainable fashion context, the relationship between motivation, opportunity, and ability, and purchase intention (Hasbullah *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the findings of Riesgo *et al.* (2023) indicate that sustainable fashion consumers tend to be less price-sensitive and more willing to spend higher amounts compared to average consumers when purchasing and researching fashion brands and products. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, the moderating role of fashion consciousness in the relationships proposed in the present study has not been empirically tested to date.

Interestingly, fashion consciousness did not moderate the relationship between willingness to pay and purchase behavior. This finding suggests that the transition from willingness to pay to actual purchasing is driven more by intrinsic values and ethical motivations than by external information or cognitive considerations about sustainable fashion.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study advances the literature on sustainable fashion consumption by moving beyond the predominant focus on general pro-environmental attitudes to examine the joint role of specific personal and corporate factors in shaping willingness to pay and subsequent behavior. While prior research has largely treated willingness to pay as an attitudinal outcome, our findings position it as a meaningful behavioral precursor that strengthens the attitudinal-behavioral link in this domain. Moreover, by incorporating fashion consciousness as a moderating variable, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how identity-related motivations interact with ethical and knowledge-based drivers of sustainable consumption. The existing literature suggests that individuals with altruistic values are more inclined to purchase sustainable fashion products (Farzin *et al.*, 2023). Building on this perspective, the present study shows that altruism not only has a positive effect on purchase intention but also increases consumers' willingness to pay a price premium, which in turn reinforces purchase intention. This finding is particularly relevant given that sustainable fashion products are typically priced higher than fast fashion

alternatives. These results are in line with previous research, including Henninger *et al.* (2016) and Pires *et al.* (2024). Overall, the results highlight altruism and CSR as particularly salient predictors of willingness to pay, while demonstrating the more limited role of brand reputation in this context, thereby refining existing theoretical models of ethical consumption among Generation Z.

With regard to managerial implications, the findings underscore the importance for fashion brands of designing interventions that strengthen altruistic orientations. This can be achieved by prioritizing transparent messages that signal an authentic commitment to responsible practices, thereby enhancing trust, loyalty, and relational ties with ethically oriented consumers. Retailers, in turn, can play a central role in generating consumer knowledge by curating and clearly signposting sustainable alternatives in both online and in physical stores. Additionally, retailer-led circular initiatives, such as repair, resale, or rental programs, can reinforce consumer knowledge and reduce the friction associated with sustainable purchasing.

For policymakers, the results point to the need for public education efforts that enhance understanding of fashion's environmental and social impacts, alongside policy support for circular infrastructure, including collection, sorting, recycling, and repair ecosystems, to facilitate broader adoption of sustainable consumption practices.

To operationalize these recommendations, brands should adopt clear and verifiable sustainability practices, such as providing transparent supply-chain information supported by third-party certifications, publishing comparable impact metrics, and communicating concrete progress toward environmental and social goals rather than relying on broad claims. Brands should also design communication campaigns that explicitly highlight the societal benefits of responsible consumption to reinforce altruistic motivations among Generation Z. Retailers, in turn, should facilitate sustainable choices by implementing clearer sustainability labeling online and in-store, creating dedicated sections for sustainable collections, and actively promoting repair, resale, and rental services as mainstream purchasing options rather than niche alternatives.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the insights gained from this study, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. In the first place, this study relies on convenience sampling approach, which constitutes a methodological limitation. Although this method is appropriate for research focused on a specific target group, it limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the studied population.

Secondly, the present research primarily examines two personal and two corporate variables. While these factors have shown to provide important insights, there are other variables that could influence consumers' willingness to pay for sustainable fashion, such as psychological traits, social influences, and economic conditions. Future research should consider a broader variety of factors to create a more comprehensive model of consumer behavior in sustainable fashion.

In the third place, the study is based exclusively on closed-ended survey questions. While this approach allows for statistical testing and model estimation, it does not capture more nuanced consumer perceptions or explanations that could have emerged through open-ended questions or qualitative methods. Future research could therefore adopt mixed-method, to gain deeper insights into consumers' motivations and reasoning.

Lastly, given that most existing studies pertain to a single country (Busalim *et al.*, 2022), it should be interesting to expand this research and to include international contexts. This undertaking can enhance the understanding of how cultural differences influence consumer perceptions of sustainability in fashion. Comparative studies across countries could reveal unique patterns and preferences, informing global brand strategies in a fast-paced fashion industry.

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9. AUTHORSHIP

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APPENDIX

Table A.1
Outer loadings of the measurement model

Construct	Item	Outer loading
Altruism	ALT 1 Social justice, correcting injustice, care for the weak	0.610
	ALT 2 Preventing pollution, conserving natural resources	0.862
	ALT 3 Equality, equal opportunity for all	0.623
	ALT 4 Unity with nature, fitting into nature	0.794
	ALT 5 A world of peace, free of war and conflict	0.600
	ALT 6 Respecting the earth, harmony with other species	0.860
	ALT 7 Protecting the environment, preserving nature	0.894
Consumer Knowledge	CK 1 I am quite familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion.	0.795
	CK 2 I often see sustainable fashion items in shopping venues (e.g., department stores, specialty shops, shopping malls).	0.548
	CK 3 I have purchased quite a few sustainable fashion items.	0.836
	CK 4 I have tried on quite a few sustainable fashion items, even if I did not end up buying them	0.793
	CK 5 I know quite a lot about sustainable fashion.	0.893
	CK 6 I have read many articles or news stories about sustainable fashion, or I have learned quite a lot about it.	0.761
Purchase Behavior	PB 1 I choose to buy exclusively sustainable clothing.	0.713
	PB 2 I buy sustainable clothing instead of conventional clothing if the quality is comparable	0.765
	PB 3 I buy sustainable clothing even if it is more expensive than conventional clothing.	0.897
	PB 4 When I buy clothing, I pay attention to whether it is sustainable.	0.810
Corporate Social Responsibility	CSR 1 is socially responsible.	0.875
	CSR 2 is committed to improving the well-being of society.	0.904
	CSR 3 is respectful of the environment.	0.877
	CSR 4 has human resource practices that go beyond the legal minimum.	0.800
Brand Reputation	BR 1 has a good reputation.	0.905
	BR 3 is respected.	0.829
Willingness to Pay More	WTP 1 I am willing to pay more for sustainable clothing than for cheaper, non-sustainable options.	0.920
	WTP 2 I would like to continue buying sustainable clothing, even if conventional brands reduce their prices.	0.909
	WTP 3 Given the benefits I receive from buying sustainable fashion, I would be willing to pay a higher price.	0.898

Source: Own elaboration.