



Friends, Brands, and Influencers: Unpacking the Role of Social Media Marketing in Sustainable Fashion Adoption

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer behaviour toward sustainable fashion practices, addressing critical environmental challenges posed by the fashion industry. The research focuses on the influence of three key SMM components—social media influencers, friends and family, and fashion brands—on consumer adoption of recycling, sustainable fabric choices, and garment care practices. A mixed-method approach was utilized, combining a comprehensive literature review with quantitative data collected through an online questionnaire distributed to a diverse audience. Linear regression analysis was conducted to test three hypotheses, all of which were supported, confirming the significant role of SMM in shaping consumer behaviour. The findings reveal that friends and family are the most trusted sources, followed by fashion brands and influencers, in encouraging sustainable practices. Despite their varying levels of influence, all three components contribute to fostering consumer interest in sustainability. The study underscores the importance of creating engaging, transparent, and reliable content tailored to different audience contexts. It also highlights the challenges of limited consumer awareness and trust, recommending strategies such as collaborative initiatives, incentives, and clear communication to enhance the impact of SMM. This research contributes to the understanding of how SMM can promote sustainable fashion practices, offering practical insights for marketers, business owners, and environmental advocates.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing (SMM) has become known as a disruptive marketing tool, connecting businesses and individuals online. Every year, the number of active users across platforms rapidly increases. Businesses have discovered how to benefit from social media by establishing communication strategies on social media, which leads to increased customer exposure, sales, and loyalty (Stelzner, 2023; Israfilzade & Guliyeva, 2023). However, social media's capabilities extend far beyond its use as a revenue-generation tool. It has already become a mind-shaper, influencing consumer behaviour, perceptions, and choices. The majority of decisions that modern people make in one way, or another are influenced by the internet.

Fashion companies see the potential of social media too. They use it for the promotion of their pages, the introduction of new collections, direct communication with the audience and online sales. Since they mainly focus on revenue part, sustainability lacks attention. Brands experience difficulties in educating and motivating audiences to follow environmentally friendly practices for choosing and taking care of fashion goods.

On the one hand social media platforms are growing the number of active users from year-to-year perspective. On the other fashion industry is growing environmental damage from the production, realisation and utilisation of goods (Smith, 2023). However, the sustainable fashion concept aims to find solutions to environmental threats that classic fashion has towards the environment.

At present time, one of the main issues that sustainable fashion is facing is - a lack of awareness and interest among consumers at the purchase stage such as choosing and buying sustainable clothing, and at after-purchase stage such as taking care of them in an environmentally friendly way and, what's most important - the recycling options. There are several ways of how to

increase the knowledge about this field among consumers, with SMM taking one of the most prominent places due to its accessibility, low-cost establishment and worldwide coverage. That's why it is crucial to understand the possibilities of SMM for sustainable fashion trends promotion. Organisations or individuals interested in adaptation of their marketing strategy towards conscious environmentally friendly patterns may find this study beneficial.

Existing literature emphasizes the influence of SMM in fostering sustainable consumption patterns, with studies exploring its potential to shape consumer behaviour through various channels, including influencers, friends and family, and brand-driven campaigns (Chu & Seock, 2020; Roozen et al., 2021).

The *research problem* lies in identifying the effectiveness of SMM in motivating consumers to adopt sustainable fashion practices and addressing the challenges in consumer awareness and trust. The *study aims* to provide actionable insights for leveraging SMM to promote sustainable behaviour, bridging the gap between environmental sustainability and marketing strategies. To achieve this, *three hypotheses* were developed, each focusing on a different SMM component: *social media influencers, friends and family*, and *fashion brands*. These hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis to determine their impact on shaping consumer behaviour.

The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with empirical quantitative research. An online questionnaire was chosen for its accessibility, wide reach, and ability to collect cross-cultural data. The results aim to provide an understanding of how SMM components influence consumer behaviour, offering practical recommendations for marketers, business owners, and environmental organizations. By integrating these findings, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on sustainable fashion and its promotion through digital marketing strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media Marketing

According to the most recent detailed analysis, 5.22 billion people worldwide used social media in 2024, accounting for 63.8 per cent of the total global population (DataReportal, 2024). Whereas figures show that 94.5 per cent of the world's internet users now use social media on a monthly basis. By integrating with traditional advertising channels and leveraging engaging content, social media not only enhances brand loyalty but also significantly influences consumer behaviour, knowledge, and decision-making (Chu & Seock, 2020; Rajput & Walvekar, 2018).

Social media marketing (SMM) involves a wide range of definitions and uses in different industries, reflecting its dynamic character in the changing digital landscape. Speaking about the components of it, the concept of *social media marketing* is a synthesis of two definitions – “social media” and “marketing”.

SMM serves as a strategic approach for creating shareable content to enhance brand visibility, drive sales, and expand customer bases (Prasad & Saigal, 2019). This evolving marketing technique fosters direct interactions between businesses and consumers, providing insights through analytics and enabling data-driven decisions (Zuhdi et al., 2019). Additionally, influencer marketing, a key component of SMM, leverages opinion leaders and bloggers to engage audiences, amplify brand awareness, and stimulate sales (Cha et al., 2019; Amboage, 2020).

SMM is now widely used in many modern businesses across different industries, therefore, the fashion industry is also influenced by it. In today's world, fashion companies must utilize SMM strategy in their businesses, because it enables them to establish and maintain connections with their prospective clients, enhance sales and stimulate active customer engagement (Prasad & Praveen, 2019; Israfilzade & Babayev, 2020).

As of 2023, social media platforms influenced over half of online purchases, with 58% of U.S. consumers buying products seen on these channels (Statista, 2024). Both fast fashion and luxury brands utilize SMM to expand market reach, reduce style turnover time, and promote sustainable practices (Loureiro et al., 2019; Kashyap, 2016). Small brands can utilize SMM as a public relations tool allowing it to communicate their brand to a wide audience with less investment needed for such channel. For larger enterprises, usage of SMM can drive an increased reach for new audiences and expansion to new markets without the need for a physical presence in those locations (Kashyap, 2016).

Nowadays, people regularly shop online, and their purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by social media platforms and digital advertising. Promotions appear on all search engines, apps, and most websites. The study by Israfilzade and Baghirova (2022) highlights the growing role of content marketing in influencing consumer purchasing intentions on platforms like Instagram. It reveals that user-generated video content is more impactful than brand-created videos, emphasizing the importance of trust and authenticity in shaping consumer decisions.

2.2. Consumer behaviour in the fashion industry

Understanding consumer behaviour in the fashion industry is essential for businesses to effectively acquire new customers, retain existing ones, and align their strategies with consumer demands. By analysing behavioural patterns and segmenting customers based on factors, companies can optimize their marketing strategies across various stages, from product launches to bestseller promotions. Consumer behaviour is a topic that draws the attention of both marketers and researchers. Having its importance for

businesses and being a prominent topic for research, consumer behaviour is constantly evolving in terms of factors that are influencing it.

Consumer behaviour refers to the decision-making processes that individuals use when allocating resources to purchase goods and services, which are influenced by factors such as demographics, culture, and personal characteristics (Solomon, 1993; Millán, 2020; Pilelienė, Batyk & Žukovskis, 2023). Social media has emerged as a critical driver of consumer behaviour, allowing marketers to influence perceptions and purchasing decisions through targeted content and influencer endorsements (Gong & Li, 2017; Chu & Seock, 2020; Pilelienė, Batyk & Žukovskis, 2023). Influencers, often regarded as trusted trendsetters, have a significant impact on consumer preferences by promoting ideas and products, making them an important tool for fashion brands (Sáez-Trumper et al., 2012; Shan et al., 2020).

Consumer behaviour in the fashion industry is shaped by several factors, including the influence of social media, the role of influencers, and sustainability considerations. Social media platforms allow brands to create community-oriented strategies, enhancing brand loyalty and consumer engagement by fostering a sense of belonging and social identity (Helal, 2019; Bandara, 2020; Israfilzade & Babayev, 2020). Influencers play a significant role in shaping purchase intentions through their trustworthiness and ability to balance ethical beliefs with commercial goals, particularly in promoting sustainable fashion (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021; Saleem, 2023). Consumers also demonstrate increased respect and purchase intent toward brands that provide transparent information about their eco-friendly practices and certifications (Lee et al., 2020; Shen, 2021). These factors, alongside demographics, cultural background, and socioeconomic status, underline the complexity of consumer decision-making in the fashion sector and highlight the importance of tailoring strategies to specific customer segments.

2.3. Conceptual structure of sustainable fashion

The annual production and market capitalization within the fashion industry has shown a consistent upward trend in recent decades, resulting in a revenue of \$1.74 billion in 2023. Despite the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the fashion industry experienced a decline in market capitalization, it has already recovered and is expected to reach a new peak by 2027 (Smith, 2024). At the same time, it is expected that the fashion industry will experience a substantial increase in pollution throughout this time.

The fashion sector shows a significant rate of product turnover and in this reality, most of the biggest brands introduce new collections every two weeks. Consequently, clients are driven to make several purchases of clothes during each season. Without a significant need, consumers are often buying clothes that they saw somebody shared online or recommended in a group chat. In order to create an increased demand, fashion brands employ various marketing techniques to encourage customers for frequent replacement of their clothes beyond the necessary frequency (Yeh & Lee, 2014). And this phenomenon received a special name “fast fashion” in the business field. However, sticking to fast fashion practices results in a decrease in consumers' ability to store clothing, leading to a significant amount of unworn or worn-once garments being wasted (Burton et al., 2020). In addition to that, the overproduction that regularly happens for fashion brands fails to align with the demand for fashion goods. This further results in the disposal of substantial quantities of unsold products produced by fashion companies.

The fashion industry contributes to environmental pollution in several ways. For instance, the fast fashion industry is continuously producing excessive amounts of goods that most often go to waste afterwards. Besides, the problem of recycling and utilization is sharply highlighted in the contemporary world. Also, toxic inks that are used during the production cycle further pollute the environment; refined petroleum products release harmful gases into the atmosphere; the production of certain fabrics requires substantial amounts of water that drains natural resources as a result (Bailey et al., 2022). The fashion industry's carbon emissions have increased by 8% in 2023 in comparison to 2019. And the forecasted increase in carbon emissions produced by the fashion sector is expected to grow by 23.5% by 2030, compared to the emissions amount in 2023 (Apparel Impact Institute et al., 2023). Therefore, the growing concerns regarding the ecological harm linked to the fashion sector require proactive measures from both consumers and corporations.

The concept of sustainable fashion emerged as a response to the significant environmental damage caused by the apparel industry, offering a contrast to fast fashion by promoting environmentally responsible practices throughout production and operations (Woodside & Fine, 2019; Pilelienė, Grigaliūnaitė & Bogoyavlenska, 2024). While both large and small enterprises strive to adopt eco-friendly measures, larger companies often find it easier to overcome implementation challenges due to their scale and resources (Nayak et al., 2020; Pilelienė, Grigaliūnaitė & Bogoyavlenska, 2024).

Sustainable fashion focuses on reducing the harmful environmental, social, and economic impacts of the fashion industry by adopting resource-efficient practices and innovative solutions throughout production, distribution, and recycling (Wagner, 2018; Niinimäki et al., 2020). It emphasizes ecological preservation, social fairness, and financial feasibility, advocating for ethical labour practices, fair wages, and protection of human rights at all stages (Joergens, 2006; Henninger et al., 2016). By promoting long-term economic success through sustainable business models, it seeks to transition from fast fashion to slower, more conscious consumption patterns (Fletcher, 2008; Solino et al., 2020). SMM plays a pivotal role in spreading awareness of sustainable practices, influencing consumer behaviour, and boosting demand for environmentally friendly products (Hassan et al., 2015; Henninger et al., 2016). Despite these efforts, challenges such as cost, consumer awareness, and implementation complexities persist, highlighting the need for strategic marketing and communication to support sustainability goals.

The theoretical framework of sustainable fashion integrates business strategies with eco-friendly practices, balancing the costs of sustainability with the savings from innovative production methods (Olatubosun et al., 2021). Key techniques include using recycled materials, sustainable packaging, and relocating production to reduce transportation emissions, with 31% of companies adopting these practices in 2022 (Smith, 2023). Businesses must actively engage consumers through education on sustainable choices, emphasizing post-purchase care and the benefits of environmentally conscious consumption (Kaner & Baruh, 2022). Current challenges include low consumer awareness, high costs of sustainable production, and misconceptions about the attractiveness of eco-friendly clothing (Armstrong et al., 2015). Effective marketing strategies, including recycling initiatives and social media campaigns, are crucial for bridging knowledge gaps and inspiring informed consumer decisions (Moon et al., 2014; Ray & Nayak, 2023). Collaboration with influencers further amplifies awareness by promoting sustainable trends and motivating younger generations to adopt eco-friendly habits (Leung et al., 2013; Johnstone & Lindh, 2017). Ultimately, a cohesive effort combining educational programs, innovative business models, and consumer engagement is essential to driving the adoption of sustainable fashion practices industry-wide.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To be a responsible modern business, fashion companies must integrate sustainable practices across production, distribution, and product life cycles. However, low consumer awareness about sustainability reduces demand, prompting companies to adopt SMM to educate consumers and drive interest in sustainable fashion choices. Social media, with users averaging 2 hours and 26 minutes daily, serves as a vital platform for spreading awareness and inspiring eco-friendly behaviours (GWI & Statista, 2024; Dixon, 2024). This research focuses on the role of SMM in influencing consumer behaviour, specifically through the impact of influencers, family and friends, and fashion brand messages. The study aims to evaluate these factors by designing and implementing a methodology that includes quantitative surveys and validity testing to ensure reliable insights. Key objectives include developing the research framework, analyzing consumer behaviour, and providing practical recommendations for businesses to optimize SMM strategies for sustainability. By addressing this knowledge gap, the research explores the statistically significant effects of SMM components on promoting sustainable fashion trends.

The hypotheses were created based on the literature analysis presented in the first section of the work. Independent variables represent different sources that share content about sustainability on social media. Those are influencers who are perceived as authority figures, relatives and friends who provide more personal endorsements and fashion companies who may offer more commercial insights. Dependent variables focus on three options of sustainable fashion practices: recycling, sustainable textiles and conscious care.

The research explores how different interactions impact the desire of respondents to use certain sustainable practices. It aims to understand the ways through which social media influences consumer habits and motivation to adopt conscious patterns. The study is expected to provide a complex description of SMM's effectiveness for sustainable fashion. The research hypotheses are formed below and presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Development of hypothesis

	Hypothesis V2	Variable
H1	There's a statistical evidence that consumers are willing to follow sustainable fashion practices they saw on social media platforms shared by Social Media Influencers .	<i>Social media influencers</i>
H2	There's a statistical evidence that consumers are willing to follow sustainable fashion practices they saw on social media platforms shared by their Family Members and Friends .	<i>Family members and friends</i>
H3	There's a statistical evidence that consumers are willing to follow sustainable fashion practices they saw on social media platforms shared by Fashion Brands .	<i>Fashion Brands</i>

This study examines the influence of three SMM components—social media influencers (SMI), friends and family (FMF), and fashion brands (FB)—on consumer choices in sustainable fashion. Its primary goal is to provide marketers, business owners, and environmental organizations with effective SMM strategies to promote sustainable fashion practices. Using a quantitative research approach, data was collected through an online questionnaire designed on Google Forms, allowing for diverse and cross-cultural insights. Online surveys, known for their cost efficiency and broad reach, were chosen to gather perspectives across various demographics (Gosling et al., 2004; Lefever et al., 2006). Statistical analysis using Jamovi software ensured reliable interpretation of results, helping assess the effectiveness of SMM in shaping sustainable consumer behaviour.

3.1. Questionnaire design and data collection

The questionnaire was divided into five sections, including an introduction to familiarize participants with the research topic, purpose, and conditions, ensuring anonymity and providing an estimated completion time. Sections 2 to 5 focused on testing hypotheses related to consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion influenced by SMM, while the final section collected

demographic information such as gender, age, education, and employment. Using a 7-point Likert scale and clear, structured questions, the survey minimized fatigue, enhanced participant focus, and facilitated the collection of diverse and high-quality data.

The study employed a structured questionnaire divided into sections to explore key factors influencing consumer behaviour toward sustainable fashion, with detailed questions provided in the appendices (see Appendix 1). Section 2 assessed consumers' environmental attitudes using a three-item questionnaire based on the Eco-Literacy framework (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019). Sections 3, 4, and 5 investigated the roles of social media influencers, family and friends, and fashion brands, respectively, in encouraging sustainable practices, with each section utilizing a 7-point Likert scale for responses. The questions were designed to measure respondents' willingness to adopt practices such as recycling, choosing sustainable fabrics, and extending garment life, using methodologies adapted from previous research (Ki & Kim, 2019; Paul et al., 2016; Wei et al., 2023). This systematic approach ensured robust data collection to analyse the impact of SMM components on sustainable consumer behaviour.

Relating to the sample and demographic profile of the respondents, during the current research 194 responses were collected which makes the sample size comprehensive enough for further analysis and concluding (see Appendix 2). In the research sample 70.1% were female, 29.4% male, and 0.5% preferred not to disclose their gender. The majority of participants (55.2%) were aged 18-24, followed by 35.6% aged 25-34, with smaller representations from the 35-44 (8.8%) and 45-54 (0.5%) age groups. Regarding education, most respondents held a master's degree (40.7%) or Bachelor's degree (40.2%), while others had a high school diploma (17.0%), a doctoral degree (1.5%), or a professional degree (0.5%). In terms of employment, 64.4% were employed (full-time or part-time), 8.2% were self-employed, 12.4% were temporarily unemployed, and 14.4% were not actively seeking employment. This diverse demographic profile provided a broad foundation for sustainably examining consumer behaviour.

In addition, reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha (α) and McDonald's omega (ω) confirmed strong consistency for the SMI, FMF, and FB factors, all exceeding the 0.7 threshold. Low standard deviation values (1.00–1.36) further indicated data reliability and consistency. These results validate the robustness of the study's methodology and the reliability of its findings.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

This research aims to explore the impact of SMM on consumers' likelihood of adopting sustainable fashion practices. To achieve this, an empirical quantitative study was conducted, supported by a comprehensive literature review, with primary data collected through a questionnaire. Regression was chosen as the main method of analysis in testing the hypothesis 1. Its attributes are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Summary for Environmental Attitude Based on Social Media Influencers

Model Coefficients - EA					Model Fit Measures		95% Confidence Interval	
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R	R ²	Lower	Upper
Intercept	3.596	0.2425	14.82	< .001	0.376	0.141	0.189	0.454
SMI	0.291	0.0519	5.62	< .001				

Summarising the analysis based on regression model coefficients and fit measures, it is possible to create a linear regression equation for the prediction of Environmental Attitude (EA) by considering the impact of Social Media Influencers (SMI). The regression equation can be expressed as:

$$EA = 3.596 + 0.291 \times SMI$$

This study found a significant connection between promotion of sustainable fashion by influencers on social media and consumer tendency to adopt such activities. Respondents agreed that they feel inspired to try some conscious practices related to fashion after they encounter them in the profiles of SMIs. This statement is confirmed by the coefficient value. Each additional point of the SMI leads to increase in EA score by 0.29 while other variables will remain constant. Social media influencers form approximately 14.1% of the desire to follow sustainable fashion practices among consumers. From the descriptive analysis, it is obvious that people tend to lean toward sustainable fashion recommendations, but they have some concerns about willingness to do so. Furthermore, the **H1 is supported**.

Regression analysis was conducted to test the H2. The results of the analysis are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Summary for Environmental Attitude Based on Family Members and Friends

Model Coefficients - EA					Model Fit Measures		95% Confidence Interval	
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R	R ²	Lower	Upper
Intercept	2.868	0.2466	11.4	< .001	0.51	0.268	0.303	0.562
FMF	0.398	0.0475	8.38	< .001				

By analyzing the coefficients and fit measures of the regression model, it is acceptable to develop a linear regression equation designed to predict Environmental Attitude (EA) taking into account the influence of Friends and Family Members (FMF). The regression equation can be formulated as:

$$EA=2.868+0.398 \times FMF$$

To summarize, the conducted study clearly shows that family and friends have a considerable influence on shaping individuals' opinions towards sustainable fashion practices. This statement can be supported by the coefficient which means that each additional point added to the score of EA will increase the FMF by 0.398. Besides that, approximately 26.8% of the individual's inclination towards sustainable fashion practices is stimulated by friends and family context. Consumers give relatively high scores to their willingness to implement sustainable fashion practices recommended by their friends and family members. Giving it a practical use, consumers would be actively interacting with recommendations given by their relatives. And if marketers know how to approach this relationship, they can enhance the popularity of sustainable fashion practices and create loyal fans. The **H2 is supported**.

To get insights about the H3 author used the regression method for the analysis. The results of the test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Summary for Environmental Attitude Based on Fashion Brands

Model Coefficients - EA					Model Fit Measures		95% Confidence Interval	
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R	R ²	Lower	Upper
Intercept	3.493	0.2433	14.36	< .001	0.399	0.159	0.344	0.593
FB	0.309	0.0513	6.03	< .001				

By examining the coefficients and fit measurements of the regression model, it is appropriate to construct a linear regression equation to forecast Environmental Attitude (EA) while considering the impact of Friends and Family Members (FMF). The regression equation can be expressed as:

$$EA=3.493+0.309 \times FB$$

The regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between Fashion Brands (FB) and Environmental Attitude (EA), with FB serving as a strong predictor of EA (p < 0.001). Thus, the data suggests that fashion brands play an important and statistically significant role in shaping consumer attitudes towards sustainability by affecting at least 15.9% of sustainable fashion practices leaning, which demonstrates that there's a potential to leverage their social media presence to promote environmentally conscious behaviours. Based on that, the **H3 is supported**.

Based on descriptive and regression analysis author can conclude that all three hypotheses can be supported. This proves that consumer behaviour in the sustainable fashion industry is significantly influenced by SMM.

5. DISCUSSION

This study explores the impact of SMM on consumer adoption of sustainable fashion practices, focusing on the roles of social media influencers, friends and family, and fashion brands. Through a hypothesis-driven approach, a questionnaire was developed to test consumer attitudes toward recycling, sustainable fabric choices, and garment care, with statistical analysis confirming the influence of SMM components on consumer decisions. The findings highlight the potential of SMM to promote sustainable fashion by addressing environmental challenges while fostering consumer engagement and societal awareness.

The topic of sustainable fashion continues to attract significant attention from researchers, who explore it from diverse perspectives using various methodologies. Studies investigate motivations for adopting sustainable practices, the influence of social capital on consumer behaviour, and potential hidden challenges affecting buying patterns (Moon et al., 2014; Roozen et al., 2021). For example, Lee et al. (2020) identified barriers such as low awareness and limited market availability, while also emphasizing the need for campaigns that explain the importance of sustainability rather than just advocating for change. Similarly, Roozen et al. (2021) demonstrated the role of linguistic nudges in encouraging eco-friendly choices, and Orminski et al. (2020) explored how Twitter discourses shape perceptions of sustainable fashion. Kim et al. (2020) examined the impact of social capital and parasocial interactions on sustainable purchases, particularly through YouTube influencers. From a business perspective, Johnstone and Lindh (2017) highlighted the influence of fashion consciousness and corporate social responsibility on millennial buying habits.

The research confirmed that consumers actively consider adopting sustainable fashion practices encountered on social media, but their trust in different sources varies. Friends and family members were identified as the most trusted sources, indicating a higher reliance on close social circles for sustainable fashion ideas. The study focused on three primary practices: recycling used clothing, choosing sustainable textiles, and following care guidelines to extend clothing lifespans. Findings showed that social environments, particularly friends and family, influence at least 26.7% of consumers' willingness to adopt sustainable practices in

daily life. To leverage this trust, sustainable fashion content should be designed to be shareable and engaging, such as do-it-yourself ideas, problem-solving tips, and positive experiences. SMM strategies could further encourage information sharing by offering rewards, such as discounts or points, for consumers who promote sustainable practices within their networks. Brands and organizations should create interactive trends and campaigns that inspire user-generated content, fostering wider adoption of sustainable practices through social sharing and collaboration.

Making information about recycling options accessible on social media can increase consumer interest and drive recommendations within their close social circles. Creative and trustworthy approaches to promoting sustainable practices are essential, especially since consumers exhibit lower trust in fashion brands compared to friends and family. While fashion brands contribute approximately 16% to consumer willingness to adopt sustainable practices, they need to take responsibility for environmental damage by building transparency and trust with their audience. Initiatives such as sustainability challenges, like a *month of eco-friendly garment care*, can encourage consumers to engage in sustainable behaviours and share their experiences. Organizations promoting environmental protection can collaborate with fashion brands to create impactful campaigns, including volunteering activities or real-time streaming events. Social media influencers, although less trusted than other sources, still account for 14.1% of consumer interest in sustainable practices, showing their potential to raise awareness. By combining openness, creativity, and collaboration, fashion brands, influencers, and environmental organizations can foster a powerful movement toward sustainable fashion.

Business owners, marketers, and eco-activists can leverage the insights from this study to design effective strategies for promoting sustainable fashion. While social media influencers play a role in raising awareness, their impact is limited unless the content shared is truthful and sincere, with incentives provided to ensure credibility. Friends and family hold the highest trust among consumers, making their recommendations the most influential for adopting sustainable practices, while fashion brands and influencers can complement these efforts by partially shaping attitudes. To achieve optimal results, a cohesive SMM strategy should combine all three contexts, using tailored, reliable content and appropriate rewards to build trust and encourage sustainable behaviour.

5.1. Limitations and implications for future research

While this research provided valuable insights into the impact of SMM on consumer behaviour toward sustainable fashion, *several limitations* should be addressed in future studies. Although the survey included participants with diverse cultural, age, educational, and employment backgrounds, it did not identify the cultural contexts of respondents, limiting the ability to create specific cultural or country profiles. Additionally, the study did not explore types of social media content, narratives, or user recall, which could provide a deeper understanding of the role of SMM in sustainable fashion. The online questionnaire method, while effective, lacked flexibility for participants to provide alternative answers or express individual opinions, potentially narrowing the scope of insights. The sample size of 194 responses was sufficient for regression analysis but could be expanded to improve generalizability, particularly by including a larger representation of age groups such as 36-44 and 45-54 years.

Future research should consider using probability sampling to target a wider audience and incorporating other SMM components, such as specific types of content or incentives, to assess their influence on consumer behaviour. Narrowing the geographic scope of respondents while maintaining demographic diversity could uncover unique regional or cultural insights. Further studies could also examine the role of SMM in fostering consumer loyalty toward sustainable fashion brands or other related areas. Expanding the questionnaire to include open-ended responses and more detailed questions could enrich the data and provide additional perspectives.

In summary, while this study contributes to understanding the influence of SMM on sustainable fashion, addressing these limitations and recommendations in future research will help provide a more comprehensive understanding of this dynamic field. By refining methods, targeting specific regions, and exploring broader aspects of SMM, future studies can expand the knowledge base and drive actionable strategies for sustainable fashion marketing.

6. CONCLUSION

Social media has become a vital tool for communication between organizations and individuals, offering rapidly evolving features that enhance user experiences and support various marketing efforts, including in the fashion industry. Businesses increasingly leverage SMM to promote sustainable fashion trends, addressing the growing environmental damage caused by fashion production and consumption cycles. Sustainable fashion aims to mitigate pollution and promote conscious consumption, yet society often lacks awareness and understanding of its importance. This research explores how SMM can motivate individuals to adopt sustainable fashion practices, providing insights valuable to marketers, business owners, and environmentally conscious individuals.

The study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods, beginning with a comprehensive literature review to analyse SMM's role in the fashion industry, consumer behaviour, and sustainable fashion challenges. This review laid the foundation for forming hypotheses and designing an internet-based questionnaire for primary data collection, chosen for its accessibility and ability to reach diverse audiences. Reliability and validity tests confirmed the accuracy of the questionnaire, ensuring credible results.

Three hypotheses were tested using descriptive and regression analysis, confirming that SMM significantly influences consumer behaviour toward sustainable fashion. The study identified the impact of social media influencers, friends and family, and fashion brands, highlighting practical strategies for promoting sustainable practices. A scientific discussion contextualized the findings by comparing them with existing research, emphasizing the practical applications of the study's outcomes.

The research confirmed a strong connection between SMM and consumer behaviour, providing actionable insights for enhancing sustainability efforts in the fashion industry. Future research could explore additional SMM techniques, and other aspects of sustainable fashion adoption, or expand the sample size and geographic scope for more generalized findings. By addressing these areas, the study contributes to a growing understanding of how SMM can foster environmentally responsible consumer behaviour in the fashion sector.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Questionnaire design

Variable	Code	Questions
<i>Environmental attitude</i>	EA1	I would characterize myself as environmentally, socially or economically responsible individual.
	EA2	I take into account the potential environmental, social or economic impact that my actions related to fashion industry can make.
	EA3	It is important to me that the fashion clothes I have are not harmful to the environment, society or economy.
<i>Social Media Influencers</i>	SMI1	In the future, I am likely to try sustainable fashion practices endorsed or posted by a social media influencer.

<i>Family members and Friends</i>	SMI2	Inspired by a social media influencer I would try recycling my clothes instead of throwing them away.
	SMI3	Inspired by a social media influencer I would try buying fashion clothes that use sustainable fabrics.
	SMI4	If a social media influencer endorses practices that would help to prolong the life cycle of my clothes, I would try them.
	FMF1	My friend's or family members' positive opinion shared via posting on social media platform would encourage me to recycle my clothes instead of throwing them away.
<i>Fashion brand</i>	FMF1	My friend's or family members' positive opinion shared via posting on social media platform would encourage me to buy fashion clothes that use sustainable fabrics.
	FMF3	My friend's or family members' positive opinion shared via posting on social media platform would encourage me to apply practices that would help to extend the life of my clothes
	FB1	Seeing fashion brands sharing posts on social media about recycling opportunities increase my intention to recycle my clothes instead of throwing them away.
	FB1	When I see a fashion brand sharing posts on social media about sustainable materials they use in garments I am very likely to choose such clothes.
	FB3	Seeing fashion brands sharing posts on social media about the practices that will help to extend the life of my clothes increase my intention to apply them.

Note: Composed by author based on Paul et al. (2016), Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2019), Ki & Kim (2019), Wei et al. (2023).

Appendix 2. Respondents profile.

Questions	Responses	N	% of Total	Cumulative %
<i>What is your gender?</i>	Female	136	70.1 %	70.1 %
	Male	57	29.4 %	99.5 %
	Prefer not to say	1	0.5 %	100.0 %
<i>Which age category do you belong to?</i>	18-24	107	55.2 %	55.2 %
	25-34	69	35.6 %	90.7 %
	35-44	17	8.8 %	99.5 %
	45-54	1	0.5 %	100.0 %
<i>What is your highest level of education?</i>	Bachelor's degree	78	40.2 %	40.2 %
	Doctoral degree	3	1.5 %	41.8 %
	High school diploma	33	17.0 %	58.8 %
	Master's degree	79	40.7 %	99.5 %
	Professional degree	1	0.5 %	100.0 %
<i>What is your employment status?</i>	Employed (full time, part-time)	125	64.4 %	64.4 %
	Self-employed (entrepreneurship, etc)	16	8.2 %	72.7 %
	Temporary unemployed (search for job)	24	12.4 %	85.1 %
	Unemployed (do not search for job)	28	14.4 %	99.5 %
	Unemployed (do not search job)	1	0.5 %	100.0 %