

Values Versus Constraints: Unpacking the Sustainable Consumption Paradox in Modest Fashion Among Gen Z in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Background: With the increasing environmental and ethical challenges that the fashion industry faces, sustainable consumption has become a defining point of concern. This paper is a research into the mismatch between the increased awareness and real-world sustainable buying activities among Generation Z and how modest fashion, sustainability, and consumer attitudes of young customers are influenced.

Methods: Mixed-method research was conducted on modest fashion among Generation Z students in Bangladesh. The researchers used a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative open-ended responses, using a framework on which awareness, attitudes, and practices were measured at a single time point. Convenience Sampling was used to select the participants as university students of Bangladesh, where Gen Z, aged 18 -29, who purchase or even consider modest apparel, so as to include a wide range of gender, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds, 48 students answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained Likert questions about demographics, purchasing frequency, knowledge, motivations, barriers, and social -media influence, as well as open-ended questions on the expectations of the brand and sustainability incentives. Descriptive statistics and correlation were created by SPSS and thematic analysis was used to identify trends in values, constraints and aspirations in the background of consumption behaviour.

Results: Results indicate that 77.1% of the participants were familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion, but there was a strong attitudinal-behaviour gap. In particular, 64.6% of the participants mentioned personal style as the main motivation of modest fashion, with only a small proportion of those who always performed sustainable purchases. The correlation analysis demonstrates that there is a moderate positive correlation between the awareness of sustainable fashion and the actual sustainable behaviour among the Gen Z modest fashion consumers ($r = 0.384$, $p = 0.007$). It implies that sustainability-aware individuals will more likely make sustainable decisions, including making purchases of environmentally friendly products, purchasing second-hand, or mending clothes. The information thus highlights a serious gap between knowledge and action that must be closed through concerted action among the stakeholders, increased consumer education, facilitation, and innovation of the industry to close the gap.

Conclusion: The study provides practical information and can be used to promote a change towards ethical behavior in the modest fashion industry and the wider market by explaining the major drivers, obstacles, and anticipations of Gen Z buyers in their purchasing patterns. These findings imply the incorporation of digital platforms, open supply stores, and peer-driven campaigns to enhance the influence of Gen Z on sustainable consumption in all world markets.

Keywords: Modest fashion, Sustainability, Generation Z, Awareness and Practice

Introduction

Over the past few years, the fashion sector has undergone increasing criticism of its environmental impact and social obligations and is increasingly moving toward sustainability among consumers, brands, and policymakers. The sector is generally perceived to be the second-largest source of environmental pollution across the globe, and its effect continues to increase along with the industry (Jia et al., 2020). Statistics published in 2015 showed that the fashion sector produced an unbelievable amount of textile waste, amounting to 92 million tonnes, with the number expected to rise by 60 % by 2030 (UNECE, 2018). Besides, UNECE (2018) also noted that 85 % textiles are disposed of annually, with most of them going to landfills or being burned (Zhang et al., 2023). Such negative implications have forced the industry to reconsider the approach to its business and find alternatives to the fast-fashion paradigm (Alfauzy & Nita, 2021a). Burdens on the environment become substantial at all levels of the apparel life cycle, the cultivation of fibres, the processing of textiles, dyeing and printing, distribution, and the end-of-life disposal (Liu, 2022; Hill & Lee, 2012). The supply chain of moving clothes

between the factory and the retail store turns out to create a significant carbon footprint, and the consumer behaviour of younger groups of consumers, including shifting trends, constant newness, and garment life cycles, has been associated with short clothes (Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025a). To most young people, clothing serves as a source of self-identification as well as social identification and identification, which social support and supports the need to constantly update their wardrobes (Barnes-Lea-Greenwood, 2010). Generation Z, which was born around the middle of the 1990s up to the beginning of the 2010s, reflects this transition with an extreme inclination towards environmentally responsible behavior, social awareness, and technological mastery. Recent e-commerce studies have recorded their shift in traditional clothes to modest fashion, which complies with the religious, cultural, or individual modesty standards (Evaluating Fashion E-Commerce Website Effectiveness for Relationship Marketing, 2024). Modest fashion has become a trend of the global scale, which combines inclusivity, sustainability, and self-expression, finding its reflection among Muslim consumers as well as growing in different cultural settings. As a result, the modest-fashion market can be viewed as a cultural identity as well as a symbol of the wider values that prompt consumers of the modern age to become more responsible and ethically oriented in their buying decisions. This type of consumer activity has led stakeholders in the industry to invest in circular business practices, such as garment recycling and up-cycling projects, which seek to minimize waste and emissions. Clear supply-chain monitoring, where customers can confirm ethical statements, and create confidence in sustainable brands towards long-term sustainability. Brands are further encouraged to incorporate environmental metrics in planning as a result of policy interventions, including the extended-producer-responsibility laws and sustainability reporting policies.

Naturally, the modest fashion market is a relatively small market in the global fashion sector, which has a comparatively large number of consumers, which in turn persistently grow throughout the 21st century, though recent research shows that the percentage of Muslims in the world fashion consumption is merely around 11 of the total spending on fashion worldwide, a figure that presents the inherent economic seriousness of the given segment, though despite the observed commercial dynamism, the academic literature that deals with the intersection of modest fashion and sustainability is relatively thin, especially in relation to consumer behaviour, even as the application of sustainable fashion in In this conceptual framework, Gálvez-Sánchez et al. (2024) argue that it is urgent to understand how socially conscious practices affect current and potential consumers during times of uncertainty because this knowledge can trigger a change in the fashion industry to be more responsive to rapidly changing social, economic, and

environmental environments, and it is also necessary to question how such practices are reflected in actual purchasing behaviour an exercise that has remained largely ignored in the existing body of literature on modest fashion. The fashion aspect of culture that can be used to express who one is is especially relevant in the context of modest fashion, where clothing is not only expected to keep the wearer decent but also provide an expression of a reserved image that tends to be socially appropriate (religiously and culturally) (Indarti and Peng, 2017) (Hassan and Harun, 2016).

This dual role of social signalling through fashion codes and self-disclosure has been emphasised by Cardoso et al. (2010) who believe that clothing acts as a symbol A blend of the modern fashion movements and religious beliefs has led to the rapid growth of modest wear among the young women, especially in Asia and e-commerce has played a key role in the expansion of the market size, especially in the countries of Southeast Asia like Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia which have seen unprecedented growth of the market size and consumption rate accelerated by online mediums (Hanzaee and Chitsaz, 2011). Against this backdrop, the small fashion industry is not only a niche business, but an expansive space that draws substantial investment as well as strategic interest by multinational corporations, a trend that is being increasingly shortlisted by special collections catering to the Islamic market by the fashion houses of H&M, Zara, Uniqlo, Tommy Hilfiger, and Dolce & Gabbana; a trend that is growing inclusive of the larger interests of corporate sustainability (Gauthier & Martikainen, 2020). The combination of such dynamics: the importance of global markets, consumer behavioural ambivalence, cultural identity politics, and corporate engagement, makes it an interesting research imperative to examine to what extent sustainable consumption behaviours are expressed in the Muslim fashion setting as part of Generation Z, a generation that is both an aspirational exercise in environmental stewardship and a symbol of conspicuous consumption.

Additionally, the increased focus on the sustainability issues of the fashion industry makes the subtle analysis of how the knowledge about sustainable practices is converted into consumer behavior essential, especially in the segment where the concepts of modesty, religious following, and modernity are merged. This gap must be filled using methodological rigor that combines quantitative and qualitative data on the evaluation of purchasing patterns and qualitative information on the motivational force, which will provide a comprehensive view of the processes that lead to the overlap of sustainable and modest fashion. Finally, scholarship in this field will not only shed light on the socio-economic and environmental consequences of modest fashion but also influence policy and industry practice to help the stakeholders develop interventions that balance consumer desire with sustainable

manufacturing, as well as to create a more culturally and ecologically sustainable fashion ecosystem.

The increasing interest in sustainable consumption in the fashion sector has become one of the critical subjects of research in the scholarly community and industry practice in particular, particularly in the context of Generation Z, a generation characterized by progressive values and a high level of mastery of digital technologies (McNeill and Moore, 2015). Empirical research has continuously reported the increased attention to environmental and ethical aspects of clothes in Gen Z, which perceives the growing interest in eco-friendly and ethically manufactured products (McNeill and Moore, 2015). As a strategic solution to the growing societal and environmental pressures intensified by the influence of fast-fashion dynamics, sustainable fashion provides consumers with an ethically sound option of purchasing a product, which at the same time fulfils the cultural role of fashion as an identity marker (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). However, there is always an existing attitudinal-behaviour gap that adversely affects the transformation of environmental awareness into tangible consumer behaviour (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). Although the literature outlines large-scale consumer tendencies, it omnipresently overlooks the small fashion industry, a fast-growing world market that is informed by religious, cultural, and personal identity demands.

Application of sustainability practices in the modest apparel industry is a topic that has not been studied enough, and yet it is evident that the people who are following the modest fashion can have strong ethical beliefs that overlap with the foundations of sustainability. The contemporary conversation on modest fashion often overlooks such crucial aspects of the product as its availability, affordability, and inclusive design and makes it a peripheral topic in the larger conversation of sustainability. Besides, the overlapping points of the cultural regimen of modesty with sustainability models have not been adequately examined; these constructs have tended to be viewed as opposing variables in earlier research but they might intersect or contradict each other in their impact on Gen- Z purchasing behaviour. The role of digital phenomena, namely social media, influencer marketing, and online identity creation, in the context of sustainable consumption in small fashion circles is also scarcely covered by scholars. The aim of the study, then, is to address these gaps by questioning the nexus of sustainability, modest fashion, and Generation Z, with the help of a culturally sensitive and behaviourally oriented analysis framework. The study will seek to clarify the unique factors and challenges that drive the sustainable consumption behaviours of Gen Z consumers of modest fashion by examining the knowledge and real consumption behaviour of such clientele, which will help build an even more inclusive and thorough model of ethical fashion consumption.

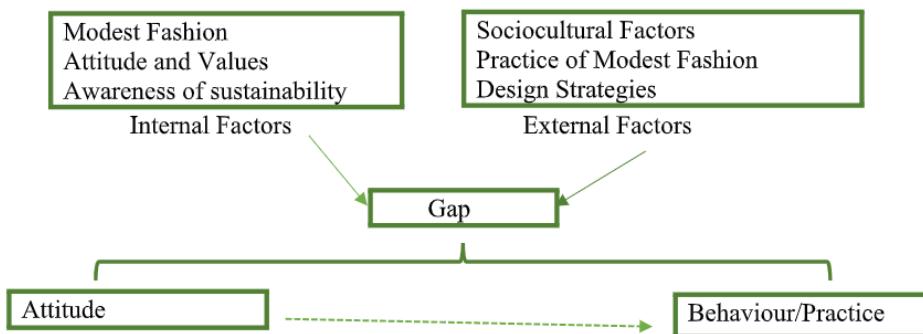


Figure 1: Factors that forecast the attitude of the behavior

The objectives are:

- To evaluate how well-informed and understanding Generation Z consumers influenced by modest fashion are about sustainable fashion.
- To examine the actual purchasing behaviours and fashion adoption of Gen Z individuals who prefer modest apparel.
- To explore how cultural, religious, and personal values influence the intersection of modest fashion and sustainability.
- To identify the barriers, such as economic, social, psychological, and market-driven factors, that deter Gen Z consumers from engaging in sustainable consumption despite their awareness.
- To examine how Gen Z's sustainable consumption is affected by social media, influencers and fashion marketing within the context of modest fashion.
- To provide strategic recommendations for modest fashion brands, educators and policymakers to promote a stronger alignment between awareness and sustainable practices.

This research holds importance for several reasons. Firstly, it discovers a neglected intersection of two noteworthy fashion movements: modest clothing and sustainability. Secondly, it captures the perspective of a group set to shape future purchasing habits and steer the sustainability goals of the fashion industry by focusing on Generation Z. Thirdly, understanding the distinction between awareness and practice can help brands, educators and policymakers create more effective strategies for sustained consumer engagement, particularly in culturally diverse markets. Finally, this study aligns with the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the objective of responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), by promoting ethical fashion choices among young consumers.

Methods

Research Design

The research design employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative open-ended responses to investigate levels of awareness, attitudes, and practices regarding sustainable modest fashion among Generation Z in Bangladesh. The justification for the mixed-method approach is that it offers a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour, incorporating numerical patterns alongside descriptive information (Battista & Torre, 2023). Thus, a cross-sectional design was used, in which participants' behaviours and perceptions were assessed at a single point in time to facilitate the examination of interactions among values, constraints, and aspirations regarding sustainable modest fashion (Xueying et al., 2025).

Target Population and Sampling

The student target population was set as Gen Z students in Bangladesh aged 18-29 years at universities who are already modest fashion consumers or may consider it. The specific population was identified due to their dominance in digital culture, their ease of social contagion, and, therefore, their potential to establish trends sustainably within the country (Branca et al., 2025). Using a convenience sampling technique, the sample's diversity in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, and educational backgrounds was taken into account to ensure it was representative of different perspectives. Forty-eight respondents were recruited online through social media, university networks and student forums. The convenience sampling technique has allowed the researcher to include units in more accessible ways.

Data Collection

The data collection involved an online structured questionnaire comprising a closed-ended Likert scale and an open-ended qualitative question. The quantitative part assessed demographic traits, the number of clothing purchases, knowledge of sustainable fashion, reasons for being in sustainable modest fashion, obstacles, and the impact of social media. Open-ended questions were also introduced in the qualitative section on the expectations of humble fashion brand representatives, recommendations for increasing sustainable consumption, and personal incentives in choosing sustainable alternatives. The questionnaire was designed based on a comprehensive literature review of sustainable fashion, consumer behaviour, modest fashion, and the consumption patterns of Generation Z. Subsequently, to ensure data triangulation, both qualitative and quantitative questions were incorporated to strengthen the interpretation of the findings. Data collection was conducted online to ensure maximum access and participation, particularly given the contact university students have with online platforms.

Data Analysis

SPSS was utilised for quantitative data analyses. Frequencies and percentages were used as descriptive statistics to summarise key variables of interest, including motivations, barriers, awareness, and purchasing behaviours. These displayed tendencies in affordability issues, social impact, and the uptake of eco-friendly modest fashion. Thematic analysis was done in a six-step process developed by Braun & Clarke (2006) on qualitative data. Responses in open-ended questions were inductively coded, and similar patterns were classified into larger themes and sub-themes that represent values, constraints, and desire to change (Naeem et al., 2023). The thematic analysis, in conjunction with quantitative trends, enabled a rich mixed-methods interpretation and, therefore, highlighted the prevalence of the issues and the rationales behind the behaviours of Gen Z consumers (Battista & Torre, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were followed stringently. Participation was strictly voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically before questionnaire completion. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was provided to all respondents, and data were stored on password-protected systems (Whicher & Wu, 2015). Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. In addition, leading questions or other coercive prompts were avoided to ensure participants' autonomy and privacy were not violated (Roberts & Allen, 2015). Ethical approval was gained from the university research ethics committee before data collection.

Results

Quantitative analysis

Frequency analysis

The distribution of respondents in Table 1 shows a majority of younger Gen-Z respondents aged 21-26 years, accounting for 47.9% and 45.8% of the sample, respectively. The 27-29 and 30-32 age groups make up only 4.2% and 2.1%, respectively, and 6.3% of the participants. Such a bias towards early adulthood highlights the applicability of fashion trends in this generation. Still, it restricts external generalisation to older Gen Z members and their environmental values, limiting their guidance for purchasing choices and sustainability studies for instructors.

Table 1: What is your age range?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | 21–23 | 23 | 47.9 | 47.9 |
| | 24–26 | 22 | 45.8 | 93.8 |
| | 27–29 | 2 | 4.2 | 97.9 |
| | 30–32 | 1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 2 shows that of the 48 Gen Z respondents surveyed on modest fashion and sustainable consumption in Bangladesh, 15 (31.3%) were male, and 33 (68.8%) were female. The gender disproportion, whereby it has almost a two-to-one female majority, is the representation of the general demographic in the participation of the youth in gender sensitive research in Bangladesh. Such an asymmetry can affect perceptions of constraints and values in sustainable consumption behaviour, and generalisations should be made carefully across the whole Gen Z generation. This provides insights into future research implications and interventions.

Table 2: What is your gender?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Male | 15 | 31.3 | 31.3 |
| | Female | 33 | 68.8 | 68.8 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 3 indicates that the descriptive analysis shows that 48 respondents (93.8 %) identify themselves as modest fashion consumers, and only 6.3% disapprove. This extremely large majority highlights a strong normative bias toward modest clothing among the sampled Gen Z group in Bangladesh. The distorted distribution may be due to cultural or market saturation effects. Still, it also raises doubts about the representativeness of the sample and the power of the social desirability effect in self-reports in the modern world.

Table 3: Do you consider yourself a modest fashion consumer?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Yes | 45 | 93.8 | 93.8 |
| | No | 3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 4 below shows that the entire sample of 48 respondents is composed of students, resulting in a 100% valid sample. This homogeneous profession speaks to a homogeneous demographic: Gen-Z members pursuing higher education in Bangladesh. The findings on sustainable consumption in small fashion will be based on students' attitudes, which may limit their applicability to other socioeconomic levels. This limitation has to be

considered by the researchers in interpreting the values-versus-constraints paradox in this regard to compare the research through analysis.

Table 4: What is your profession?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Student | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The median response in Table 5 to monthly fashion spending among Gen Z respondents shows a high concentration at the lower end: 52.1% (n=25) spend less than 20,000, with only 16.7% (n=8) spend 27,000.00 or higher. The 21000-23000 group accounts for 18.8% (n=9), and the 24000-26000 segment accounts for 12.5% (n=6). The proportion of 70.8% who have spent less than or equal to 23000 is cumulative, highlighting constraints on value-oriented fashion purchasing and questioning the possibility of practising eco-oriented consumption without jeopardising daily financial security.

Table 5: Please mention your one expenditure

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Below 20,000 | 25 | 52.1 | 52.1 |
| | 21,000-23,000 | 9 | 18.8 | 18.8 |
| | 24,000-26000 | 6 | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| | 27000 and above | 8 | 16.7 | 16.7 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The correlation of motivations in Table 6 shows that personal values are the most common (48 respondents, 47.9%), while religious and cultural beliefs, although important, are relatively less common (33.3% and 18.8%, respectively). This implies that considerations of Gen Z consumers in Bangladesh are actively taken into account when participating modestly, and that there is a subtle shift in the previous drivers. Sustainable consumption measures must therefore adopt a personal value alignment approach rather than rely on religious or cultural frames.

Table 6: What motivates your choice to wear modest fashion?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-------------------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Religious beliefs | 16 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| | Cultural values | 9 | 18.8 | 18.8 |
| | Personal values | 23 | 47.9 | 47.9 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 7 shows that 33.3 % of the respondents buy clothing once a month, 41.7 % once every three months, 10.4 % once every six months, and 14.6 % infrequently. Accordingly, most of them (about 75%) buy at least once every 3 months, indicating a fairly high rate of apparel acquisition. This trend highlights a conflict between aspirational sustainable values and economic or cultural limitations that shape consumption patterns, and seeks to raise

responsible purchasing practices worldwide, particularly in the context of Gen Z modest fashion in Bangladesh.

Table 7: How do you shop for clothing

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|----------------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Monthly | 16 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| | Every 3 months | 20 | 41.7 | 75.0 |
| | Every 6 months | 5 | 10.4 | 85.4 |
| | Rarely | 7 | 14.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The survey responses in Table 8 demonstrate that 18.8 % of people always choose to wear sustainable clothes, 25.0 % choose it most of the time, and 45.8 % choose it occasionally. Therefore, most of them depict intermittent participation, which is a paradox of values being recognised, but limited due to practical or cultural considerations. This trend highlights the conflict between eco-friendly ideals and daily consumption decisions by simple garment-wearing Gen Z in Bangladesh.

Table 8: How do you intentionally choose sustainable fashion items?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 9 | 18.8 | 18.8 |
| | Often | 12 | 25.0 | 43.8 |
| | Sometimes | 22 | 45.8 | 89.6 |
| | Rarely | 3 | 6.3 | 95.8 |
| | Never | 2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 9 shows that 77.1% of the 48 respondents knew about sustainable fashion, indicating high knowledge of the basics. The level of environmental awareness towards the industry was below 10.4%; only 6.3% were familiar with sustainable brands, and only 2.1% were aware of the implications of fast fashion. The knowledge of similar expressions (ethical, slow, circular) was 4.2%. These results show that there is a strong knowledge-practice divide, with conceptual awareness slightly ahead of actionable literacy in small proportions in the present consumer practices in the survey conducted in Bangladesh.

Table 9: Please rate your agreement with the following statements: with 2. (1 to 5)

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|--|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | I understand what sustainable fashion means | 37 | 77.1 | 77.1 |
| | I am aware of the environmental impact of the fashion industry | 5 | 10.4 | 87.5 |
| | I know how to identify sustainable fashion brands or products | 3 | 6.3 | 93.8 |
| | I am familiar with the concept of fast fashion and its consequences. | 1 | 2.1 | 95.8 |
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|----|-------|-------|-------|
| I have heard of terms such as ethical fashion, slow fashion, and circular fashion. | 2 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

In Table 10, the trend is strongly reflected in the table showing that respondents of Gen Z in Bangladesh's origin have a strong tendency toward sporadic buying of new modest fashion: 50% buy new modest fashion sometimes, 22.9% always, and 18.8% often. In the marginal category, 6.3% do not buy often, and 2.1% do not buy at all. These trends highlight a conservative, low-involvement in low-key fashion, indicating that sustainable consumption is moderated by financial, cultural, or access limitations within this group.

Table 10: How do you buy new modest fashion items ?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 11 | 22.9 | 22.9 |
| | Often | 9 | 18.8 | 41.7 |
| | Sometimes | 24 | 50.0 | 91.7 |
| | Rarely | 3 | 6.3 | 97.9 |
| | Never | 1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The survey responses in Table 11 show that 37.5 % of respondents never buy second-hand modest clothing, while only 6.3 % buy it always, suggesting that they mostly wear new clothes. The others are occasional purchasers, sometimes (18.8%) and rarely (22.9%) taking 1/3 of the respondents. In this allocation, a low but substantial receptiveness to sustainability, but it emphasises the primacy of limitations, such as price, availability and culture, compared to values. The makers should confront these constraints.

Table 11: How do you buy second-hand or thrifted modest clothing?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Often | 7 | 14.6 | 20.8 |
| | Sometimes | 9 | 18.8 | 39.6 |
| | Rarely | 11 | 22.9 | 62.5 |
| | Never | 18 | 37.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 12 indicates that 1 out of 3 respondents will stop consuming brands because of their unethical practices, whereas close to 40 % will stop using them only occasionally, and 4 % will hardly or not stop using at all. The combined 54% who never or frequently abstain is an indicator of ethical conscience among Gen Z consumers in Bangladesh. However, the 39-100 %

who occasionally do so highlight the conflict between ambitions and financial or fashion limitations, a paradox of sustainable consumption of a modest fashion.

Table 12: Have you ever avoided buying from a brand due to its unethical practices?

| | | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 16 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| | Often | 10 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 54.2 |
| | Sometimes | 19 | 39.6 | 39.6 | 93.8 |
| | Rarely | 2 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 97.9 |
| | Never | 1 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 13 indicates that 72.9% of respondents said they would not buy from brands with unethical practices, suggesting that Gen Z is highly sensitive to ethics. The 27.1% who did not avoid may have been due to perceived constraints or the absence of alternatives. The cumulative percentage confirms the preponderance of ethical avoidance. The findings indicate that there is evidence of market segments and consumer behaviour in the new economy, in general, within this small fashion supply chain.

Table 13: Have you ever avoided buying from a brand due to its unethical practices?

| | | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-------|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Yes | 35 | 72.9 | 72.9 | 72.9 |
| | No | 13 | 27.1 | 27.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 14 shows that almost half of Gen Z respondents (47.9%) are concerned with modest fashion trends regardless of sustainability, which is a rather dominant value-based behaviour. A significant minority (35.4%) prioritises modesty and sustainability, and only 6.3% prefer modesty. The other 10.4% do not care about either dimension, and a paradox arises between aspiration values and material limitations in the small-scale Bangladesh fashion market. This distribution highlights the need for the government to be context-sensitive in sustainability interventions.

Table 14: Which of the following best describes your modest fashion shopping behaviour?

| | | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|--|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | I follow modest fashion trends regardless of sustainability. | 23 | 47.9 | 47.9 | 47.9 |
| | I look for both modesty and sustainability in fashion. | 17 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 83.3 |
| | I prioritise modesty even if sustainability is lacking. | 3 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 89.6 |
| | I am not concerned about either modesty or sustainability | 5 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 15 indicates that the sample shows a significant tendency towards donation and resale, with 29.2% of participants reporting habitual involvement. A total of 45.8% of them participate at least regularly, indicating increased adherence to circular practices. However, 22.9% of respondents also demonstrate occasional to no involvement, which reflects the conflict between available sustainable values and performance limitations. These results shed more light on the contradiction of aspirational values but poor adoption among Gen Z Bangladeshi modest fashion followers.

Table 15: How do you donate or resell used clothing?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 14 | 29.2 | 29.2 |
| | Often | 8 | 16.7 | 45.8 |
| | Sometimes | 15 | 31.3 | 77.1 |
| | Rarely | 7 | 14.6 | 91.7 |
| | Never | 4 | 8.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 16 shows that 50 % of the respondents (50%) confirm that their religious values influence their fashion preferences, but only 14.6 % use cultural values and 29.2 % use personal values as the motivators. Only a low percentage (6.3% above) sees modest fashion as an instrument of sustainability. In this way, spiritual inspirations are on the centre stage. In contrast, ethical and cultural aspects are in the background, revealing a strong hierarchy of values that shapes Gen Z's modest fashion spending in Bangladesh within the regional context.

Table 16: Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following with 2. (1 to 5)

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|---|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | My religious beliefs influence my fashion choices. | 24 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| | My cultural values align with the principles of modest fashion. | 7 | 14.6 | 64.6 |
| | My personal values motivate me to choose sustainable fashion | 14 | 29.2 | 93.8 |
| | Modest fashion can contribute to sustainable living. | 3 | 6.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The distribution represents 27.1% (in Table 17) of the respondents who repair or reuse clothes always, and 22.9% of the respondents who repair or reuse clothes frequently. Combined, 49.9 % of them practice legal activities frequently, and another 39.6 % practice this occasionally. Only 8.3% often and 2.1% never, which suggests that the tendency toward sustainable consumption is rather strong. However, the remaining 10% indicates limitations on active

use, highlighting the paradox of modest fashion consumption in the dynamic city market, which reflects broader socio-economic changes.

Table 17: How often do you repair or reuse old clothing?

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Always | 13 | 27.1 | 27.1 |
| | Often | 11 | 22.9 | 50.0 |
| | Sometimes | 19 | 39.6 | 89.6 |
| | Rarely | 4 | 8.3 | 97.9 |
| | Never | 1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 18 results demonstrate that 58.3 % of participants mention high price as a major obstacle, and that the lack of availability (22.9 %) and limited modest options (8.3 %) are also factors that prevent purchasing the products. Very few (2.1%) complain of inadequate information, and another 8.3% report a mismatch in trend or style. The combination of these results highlights a cost-driven limitation that prevails over informational or aesthetic considerations in sustainable modest fashion purchases of Gen Z Bangladeshi consumers in the prevailing market environment.

Table 18: What prevents you from buying more sustainable modest fashion?

(Select all that apply)

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|
| Valid | High price | 28 | 58.3 | 58.3 |
| | Lack of Information | 1 | 2.1 | 60.4 |
| | Lack of availability | 11 | 22.9 | 83.3 |
| | Limited modest options | 4 | 8.3 | 91.7 |
| | Trend/style mismatch | 4 | 8.3 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 19 indicates conflict among aspirational values and material limitations among Gen 0 Bangladeshi students. 86 % perceive sustainable fashion as too expensive, and 29 % indicate they are struggling to find modest sustainable brands, for a combined total of 87 % of respondents. 10.4% would purchase given the choice, and 2% would blame affordability as the only reason. These results highlight the cost-access paradox that prevents sustainable consumption in the fashion industry. The determinants are price and product availability, whose ethical aspirations align with purchasing.

Table 19: Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following with 2. (1 to 4)

| | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|---|----|---------|--------------|
| Valid | Sustainable fashion is too expensive for students like me | 28 | 58.3 | 58.3 |
| | Sustainable modest brands are difficult to find | 14 | 29.2 | 87.5 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|-------|-------|-------|
| I would buy sustainable fashion if more modest options were available | 5 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 97.9 |
| I want to buy sustainably, but cannot afford to. | 1 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The tabular data indicate that 54.2% of the people surveyed follow modest fashion influencers, and only 6.3% of respondents acknowledge following influencers to inform their fashion choices. Nevertheless, only 4.2 % would purchase a product based on an influencer's recommendation. Still, 20.8% found sustainable brands through social media, indicating that there is a medium for environmentally friendly exposure. Lastly, 14.6% feel social media pressure as a trigger for fast-fashion purchases, highlighting the conflict between aspirational effects and green motives.

Table 20: How much do you agree with the following statements? (2. from 1 to 5)

| Valid | | Frequency | % | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|-------|---|-----------|-------|---------|--------------|
| | I follow modest fashion influencers on social media | 26 | 54.2 | 54.2 | 54.2 |
| | Influencers shape my fashion preferences | 3 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 60.4 |
| | I am more likely to buy a product if an influencer promotes it. | 2 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 64.6 |
| | I have discovered sustainable brands through social media. | 10 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 85.4 |
| | Social media creates pressure to follow fast fashion trends. | 7 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis demonstrates that there is a moderate positive correlation between the awareness of sustainable fashion and the actual sustainable behaviour among the Gen Z modest fashion consumers ($r = 0.384$, $p = 0.007$). It implies that sustainability-aware individuals will more likely make sustainable decisions, including making purchases of environmentally friendly products, purchasing second-hand, or mending clothes. But the correlation is not strong, but moderate, so that being aware does not translate to behaviour fully, which helps to prove that there exists an awareness-behaviour gap. The barriers to adopting sustainable behaviour may be other (e.g. price, availability, cultural norms) factors, even after being aware.

| | | Correlations | |
|-----------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|
| | | Awareness | Behaviour |
| Awareness | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .384** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .007 |
| | N | 48 | 48 |
| Behaviour | Pearson Correlation | .384** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .007 | |
| | N | 48 | 48 |

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

Qualitative Analysis

Theme 1: Value-Driven Motivation for Sustainability

Gen Z respondents consistently discussed sustainability as a value decision rather than an economic or aesthetic one. The motivations demonstrate a multifaceted relationship among environmental responsibility, ethical demands, aesthetic value, and self-identity expression, as a tendency to unite moral principles and personal style.

Sub-Theme 1: Environmental Responsibility, Ethical Awareness and Trust in Sustainable Practice.

One prevailing response based on the information is that Gen Z is highly environmentally conscious. Some of the respondents made direct associations between their fashion preferences and environmental conservation, stating that “Because it’s environment friendly” and “Rivers are polluted with dyeing water that hurts me”. These statements show that environmental degradation, particularly water pollution through dyeing of the textiles, is not an abstract phenomenon but a reality that is being experienced. This agrees with a study conducted by Šimek & Sadíkek (2024), who also revealed that the habits of the Gen Z generation in consumption are deeply connected with anxiety about the environment and awareness of the ecological impact of fast fashion. Nevertheless, this environmental consciousness is not an individual one, yet it is intertwined with ethical requirements that are related to production. The participants reinforced the theme of brand integrity several times, mentioning “Greater transparency about how clothes are made, and Fair labour practices”. This can be compared to the data given by Vassalo et al. (2024), who suggest that the idea of transparency and anti-greenwashing initiatives is becoming a major concern regarding gaining Gen Z loyalty to the brand associated with sustainability. On the contrary, for other age cohorts, affordability might be more important than ethics. Gen Z seems to consider sustainability to be an unfinished process without ethical working environments.

Respondent # 17, 22 said, respectively

"From modest fashion brands, I expect a genuine commitment to sustainability that goes beyond marketing. This includes using eco-friendly and ethically sourced materials, ensuring fair labor practices, reducing waste through mindful production processes, and offering transparency about their supply chains. Additionally, I appreciate when brands create timeless and versatile pieces that align with the values of modest fashion, encouraging long-term use rather than fast fashion consumption." (Respondent # 17).

"More sustainable products that won't damage the environment and trendy style" (Respondent # 22).

Similarly, Liu et al. (2023) demonstrate that the perception of authenticity plays a huge role in determining the continued involvement of Gen Z in the sustainable fashion markets. This is similar to the scepticism that participants hold about superficial claims of sustainability, and this supports the notion that trust and transparency are driving forces as opposed to the secondary ones. However, not every participant was that ethically convinced; some of them merely gave the answer of Nothing, which implies that not everyone shares the value-driven motivation, which is also an opposition that suggests the intra-generational diversity.

Sub-Theme 2: Aesthetics, Social Impact and Identity in the form of modest fashion.

Though the environment and the ethical issues were factors, a lot of the respondents insisted that sustainability should correspond to fashion as well. Statements such as "Fashionable," "Trending style but sustainable," and "Comfortness and presentable outlook" illustrate how style, comfort, and trend relevance remain central. This upholds the position made by Wang & Jiang (2024), citing that Gen Z values a seamless combination of aesthetics and functionality in their interactions with new fashion technologies or tendencies. Correspondingly, Mullick et al. (2025) point out that the cultural modesty preference of South Asian consumers is frequently counterbalanced by the wish to be fashionable, as shown by the participants who mention the role of the "Hijab" and the necessity of sustainable fashion, which has to be modest and fashionable at the same time.

Furthermore, participants referenced social media as a key influence, noting that "Social media create" and "Influencers, friends motivate me." This aligns with the study of Razzaq et al. (2018), which discovered that Islamic identity and peer pressure are influential in determining sustainable consumption in small-scale fashion settings. Nevertheless, in contrast to

previous generations, when modest fashion was presented as a more religious idea, Gen Z presents it as an identity, style, and social approval blend.

Theme 2: Structural & Market Constraints Limiting Sustainable Consumption in Bangladesh

Gen Z has a great interest in sustainable modest fashion, but they consume less due to more generalised economic, market, and informational constraints. This theme examines how these limitations overwhelm their sustainability hopes.

Sub-Theme 1: Cost Obstacles and Low Market Diversity.

The main limitation that is keeping Gen Z in Bangladesh out of the full-scale commitment to sustainable modest fashion is the overlap of expensive price tags and the lack of attractive models. Participants repeatedly stressed the need for “affordable price,” “budget-friendly”, and “less expensive” options, while others noted that “expensive sustainable options limit access.” These remarks show that affordability is not merely a choice but a structural constraint- a constraint that limits access of students who generally have less disposable income. This is similar to Yang et al. (2024), who maintain that despite having high pro-environmental values, financial trade-offs undermine the willingness of Gen Z to act sustainably.

The problem is, however, that affordability in Bangladesh is compounded by a market that is not diverse and accessible. Participants insisted on the need for “more options and availability,” “more modest alternatives,” and greater “design variety,” meaning that the market of sustainable modest fashion in Bangladesh is not yet fully developed. Consumers may be prepared to trade off price at times, but they cannot trade off choice because the products are just not available. In the same regard, Bhandari et al. (2022) established that supply-side barriers such as material scarcity, small scale, and design constraints inhibit the adoption of sustainable apparel across the world. Instead, large product lines available in the fast fashion sector overshadow sustainable brands, which leave the consumer with fewer modest and varied options in the sustainable category.

Moreover, the participants were worried about “more comfortable products, showing that modest sustainable fashion also faces the issue of tactile and functional demands. This matches the explanation given by Branca et al. (2025), who describe that Gen Z appreciates both style and comfort, and when sustainable products do not satisfy either, intention-behaviour gaps increase. Hence, affordability and lack of diversity in Bangladesh do not act independently but as mutually supportive structural restraints that cumulatively inhibit the capacity of Gen Z to turn values into practice.

Sub-Theme 2: Rapid Fashion, Social Forces, and Knowledge Inefficiencies.

In addition to structural limitations, behavioural and perceptual barriers also decrease the possibility of shifting towards sustainable modest fashion in Bangladesh. Participants acknowledged that “fast fashion is growing high” and admitted feeling conflicted when stating “don’t go for fast fashion,” and that they are under pressure from the attractiveness of trend-driven, cheap and socially approved consumption. Cesar & Ødegard (2025) also state that Gen Z tends to compromise between individual principles and social norms, and that branded and trendy dressing can signify identity and belonging. Quite the contrary, sustainable modest fashion does not have such a symbolic power now, and it is less socially rewarding.

In the same way, social media accelerates this attraction. Although the participants complained about trend following, Instagram-like platforms contribute to impulse buying, according to Djafarova and Bowes (2021). Fast fashion is thus not only affordable but also instantly socio-culturally relevant, which Bangladeshi sustainable fashion cannot maintain.

In addition, there are significant knowledge gaps. Participants repeatedly stated “I don’t know,” “they need me to know more about them,” and urged stakeholders to “spread more information through media, varsity, so that people know more about modest fashion.” This uncertainty is a symptom of mistrust and lack of knowledge about sustainability claims, and this is consistent with Dominguez et al. (2023), who found that Gen Z returns to fast-fashion avenues that they know well due to ignorance. Similarly, Fabiana et al. (2024) observe that when no information is available, sustainability will be a mere abstraction and not a practical buying parameter. Thus, as much as Gen Z cares about the concept of sustainability, the dominance of fast fashion, peer influence and a lack of information may become traps of behaviour that cannot be escaped without making a great shift in the industry towards the modesty of sustainable fashion.

Theme 3: Aspirations for Change- What Gen Z Wants from Brands & the System in Bangladesh

Although appreciative of sustainable modest fashion, multiple obstacles eventually limit the involvement of the Bangladeshi Gen Z consumers and have them imagine a fashion ecosystem where brands are the ones facilitating the process of making sustainable decisions pragmatic and meaningful, in a well-rounded and inclusive manner.

Sub-Theme 1: Ethics, Eco-Responsibility, and Sustainability Education

Responses obtained by the participants included being honest, environmentally friendly, and ethical in the brand practice and answers like while responses such as “Don’t greenwash” and “Transparency about supply

chain” show a lack of trust in the cosmetic appearance of being sustainable. The problems of materials and labour standards were also mentioned by many, and they mentioned “organic cotton, recycled fabrics” and the need to follow “fair labour practice”. These are very strong indicators that the Bangladeshi Gen Z cannot have a conceptualisation of sustainability without ethical responsibility- perhaps as an expression of concern about the environment as well as social consciousness. Nevertheless, the participants did not note only the existence of production ethics; knowledge and enlightenment are required. Answers like “Spread more information via media,” “Use influencers,” and “Educate through campaigns, QR codes, videos” imply that there is a desire to have knowledge on sustainability that is accessible and interactive. In line with this, as stated by Branca et al. (2025), the capacity of product attributes to facilitate engagement with Generation Z will rely on the perceived authenticity in the stories on sustainability. On the other hand, without proper communication, ethical work may go unnoticed or even mistrusted, and, as a result, its positive effects will not be produced, regardless of the intentions (Andrade and Vieites, 2025).

Moreover, the sub-theme is also applicable to the Bangladeshi environment, which indicates the scattered knowledge of eco-friendly fashion as scattered. Some of these participants are educated and motivated, and some participants identify knowledge gaps, which are associated with the finding of Bhandari et al. (2022) that a lack of consumer education is one of the barriers to sustainable sourcing and adoption in emerging markets. Therefore, Gen Z wants brands to combine open and responsible production with new educational efforts to create knowledgeable consumption.

Subtheme 2: Affordable, Trend-Driven, Accessible Sustainable Fashion and Circularity Options

Sustainable choices were driven by essential consideration in the form of cost, availability and style. According to the participants, the key features of a sustainable modest fashion included “Affordable and trendy,” “Reasonable prices,” “More availability,” and “Stylish, versatile, durable pieces,” which, in turn, indicated that the range of sustainable modest fashion should provide both budget consideration and address the aesthetic appeal. It is reflected in Cascavilla et al. (2025), who discovered that the intention to pay a higher price to sustainability fashion grows only when affordability and the perceived style and utility are balanced. Participants noted the interest in such initiatives such as “Upcycling & DIY,” “Swaps and renting,” and “Secondhand markets.” These reactions indicate that the Bangladeshi Gen Z is intrigued by the alternative forms of consumption that minimise wastage and fit the modest fashion. My one respondent similarly said (#21),

“More availability and reasonable for the price”.
(Respondent # 21).

Armstrong et al. (2015) also cite that circular strategies in the form of upcycling and swapping lead to consumer engagement since the consumers can sustain their style preferences. Nevertheless, obstacles still exist. The existing market patterns and set-ups in Bangladesh do not satisfy the preferences of Gen Z, which are shaped towards access and circularity; thus, such projects are a far-off aspiration, and they are not quite mainstream. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) also indicate that social media can be effective in highly focusing on such practices through the facilitation of visibility and social validation- a tactic that key participants support in the application of influencer-led campaigns.

Therefore, the theme is the inconsistent aspiration that Generation Z desires fashion to be fashionable and affordable, affordable, accessible, recyclable, yet systemic constraints are organisational change in price and distribution and consumption theories to achieve all these aims.

Discussion

Gen Z is redefining modest fashion as a vehicle for self-expression, rather than merely following social pressure. The dual effect of self-monitoring and self-concept, which contributes to an increased sense of individuality and agency in clothing decisions, can be the primary reason why fashion awareness among contemporary consumers has increased (Niinimaki et al., 2020). Recent empirical results mean that Generation Z is focused on uniqueness, authenticity, and inclusiveness, therefore, leading to a transition towards more modest fashion that crosses the boundaries of the traditional culture or religion (Niinimaki et al., 2020). The high percentage of 64.6 percent on personal style preference highlights the increasing popularity of fashionable modest clothing, even by non-identifiers to a particular cultural or religious group, thus allowing consumers to incorporate modesty into their daily fashion. The initial attempts were made by Leung et. al (2015), in which the authors identified the psychological and social variables that influence fashion consumption, and more recently, a study by Jeong and Kim (2024) showed that the anthropomorphic attributions to nature and the consequential psychological connection with nature mediate the tendency towards sustainable fashion in Gen. Z and positively affect wellbeing. This is supported by Palomo-Dominguez et al (2023) which show that values are the main motivators of purchasing intentions on the part of this generation but there is still a gap between the intentions and actual behaviour. The found obstacles, including high cost, low availability, and incompatible small styles with the current trends, are reflected in the literature, such as Ronda (2024),

who considers structural barriers to be the inhibitor to moving environmental motivation to action purchasing.

The examination of Gen Z-related ideas in the international research environment repeatedly confirms that costliness and the lack of these products are the main factors preventing the overall usage of sustainable clothing (Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025b). In a similar effect, the design, supply-chain, and cost concerns among young consumers reported by Alfaudy and Nita (2021) are an indication that brands have the opportunity to re-engineer messages to fit more sustainable, creative, and style-focused designs that appeals to the inherent creativity and authenticity of Gen Z. The widespread popularity and a wide range of brands offered by modest fashion testify to its ubiquity throughout the industry (Zainudin et al., 2019). The way it has been adapted into street, leisure, and casual wear proves the ability of the sector to transform on a sustainable basis without losing its trendiness, thus broadening its use beyond the ethical or religious incentives and establishing modest apparel as an element of the modern personal style.

The consumer environment is shifting and the brands and designers must take advantage and implement the principles of zero-waste design, sourcing materials, and slow-fashion that meet the dual needs of style and sustainability of Gen Z (Naderi and Van Beenburg, 2018). Religious stewardship stories, the ecological responsibility read as a moral obligation, have the potential to appeal to religious listeners, thus broadening the reach of eco-friendly clothes. Making simple fashion items attractive, ethical, and environmentally responsible, they best turn awareness into habitual consumption.

The use of digital storytelling, official educational content, and collaboration with influencers only intensifies the interest of GenZ, transforming awareness into the regularity of sustainably buying products. In addition, data analytics can identify specific tastes, and tailored eco-solutions will be offered to them, which also contributes to brand loyalty and involvement of the consumers. These conclusions are supported by the previous literature that has recognized GenZ as a socially aware generation that is driven by the concerns of excess consumption, socially responsible production, and global warming (Naderi and VanSteenburg, 2018). The capacity to convert this awareness into knowledgeable and effective consumer decisions seems somewhat limited, although there is general awareness. This aligns with the "attitude–behavior gap" often highlighted in sustainability literature, wherein consumers express positive attitudes regarding sustainability but do not consistently engage in sustainable buying practices (Joy et al., 2012). Sustainable modest fashion can also become aspirational and trend-focused by connecting sustainability with the personal style choices of Gen Z. The conduct of the research provides more choices for suitable

modest fashion products; besides that, the modest fashion industry can reduce the contribution of fashion waste. Self-concept, reference group, brand attitude, and brand status have a significant impact on the women's modest fashion consumption decisions (Nurani & Adinugraha, 2022).

The findings suggest that members of Generation Z prioritise authenticity and transparency, but for sustainable modest fashion to be a feasible selection, it must be affordable. The research goal of putting forward tactics that can help to close the gap between the awareness and practice of sustainable consumption of modest fashion of members of Generation Z is directly substantiated by this observation. In the realm of Muslim fashion, this implies not only the consideration of aesthetic preferences but also the assurance that products comply with modesty standards (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). The sustainability path of modest fashion goes beyond ecological responsibility; it corresponds to the general principles of modesty, simplicity, and conscious consumption. This shift in paradigm transforms the small industry at the same time, strengthening a global trend of a more sustainable, conscious future of the entire fashion industry, including designers, consumers, policymakers, and supply chains.

Limitations

The data analysis and conclusions of this study have one of the primary limitations, with a relatively small sample of students working at the university, which is limited to a convenience group. Nevertheless, the study subject needs to be thoroughly assessed in terms of how Generation Z is interacting with modest fashion in Bangladesh, an audience that stretches way beyond higher institutions of learning. This is due to the limited sample, which affects the external validity and lowers statistical power to pick up subtle relationships. Increasing the sample size would make generalization more valid and allow for more connections between variables. Moreover, the items on the Gen Z sustainable consumption detailing the instrument might be insufficient to capture the construct in question, which will result in measurement bias. In spite of the fact that cultural sensitivity was pursued in the study, modest fashion is influenced by a pyramid of religious, cultural, and individual standards; slight differences in the understanding and application of modesty are probably underrepresented, which emphasizes the difficulty of naming such diversity within a single study. The scope of the methodology used in the future study needs to be expanded to consider the reality of this demographic.

Future Research Directions

The current research provides a baseline of the sustainable consumption habits in the small fashion industry among Generation Z, where

a strong perception of the environmental and ethical demands is combined with a certain negligently low degree of their corresponding transformation into purchasing behaviors. This contradiction highlights the importance of specific future research on the complexity of the interplay between modesty, cultural identity, and sustainability. To explain the role of religious and traditional values in mediating the uptake of sustainable modest apparel, scholars must thus focus on particular faith-based or culturally diverse populations to develop a holistic model that will explain the mutual impact of such values on the processes of ethical decision-making. Furthermore, the use of state-of-the-art strategies of sustainability design, including zero-waste patterns, recyclable fabrics, and multifunctional clothes, is a good prospect of matching the functionality of products with simple aesthetic requirements, which could possibly create new design paradigms to fit modesty, beauty, and ecology in the workplace. At the same time, the ubiquity of digital communication shared by Generation Z will require empirical studies on how online activities, influencer marketing, virtual communities, and immersive platforms affect the development of sustainable perceptions and consumption patterns towards modest fashion; this analysis can shed light on effective digital interventions that would stimulate responsible spending.

Also, researching how modest fashion brands and retailers are acting in relation to the sustainability demands of Gen Z, including making their supply chains transparent and inclusive in developing their products, and listening to their customers, will help shed light on the good practices that will appeal to socially conscious consumers. The empirical results show that the presence of personal values explains the choice of sustainable modest clothing by Gen Z, about 70.8 percent, which implies that the marketing approach to sustainability is to position the concept as a natural lifestyle decision based on personal values. However, economic, cultural and market-based bottlenecks, especially cost, lack of accessibility, as well as mismatch with the current trends, continue to be obstinate conditions to the spread of green consumption. This makes designers encourage the use of zero-waste production methods, slow-fashion ideas, and seek new sustainable fabrics to create versatile, durable, and fashion-compliant clothing that would attract the attention of the GenZ consumers. Schools and media interventions should close the gap between social awareness and practice by integrating the curriculum and making efforts to target populations, and policymakers need to promote transparency and impose moral production norms to bring about change in the system. Finally, the generation of mindful consumption as an aspect of consumer advocacy, transparent brand support, and participation in community-based sustainability efforts is essential towards increasing the pivot towards a resilient, morally centered, modest fashion industry.

Conclusion

This study has explored the intersection of Generation Z, sustainability, and modest fashion and tried to fill the gap between the increased environmental consciousness and the real practices of sustainable consumption. The results have shown that, despite having a high level of awareness concerning the sustainability problem, Generation X consumers of modest fashion often have their intentions frustrated by a system of personal, social, cultural, and structural barriers that hinder the communication of awareness to action. According to quantitative data, awareness has a significant positive correlation with objective sustainable consumption; however, two main obstacles are dominant, namely high prices (56.3%) and the low availability to sustainable modest fashion (60.4%), which have critical negative impacts on purchasing behaviours. Nevertheless, these barriers notwithstanding, a significant percentage of the respondents said that they strongly wished to adopt a more sustainable approach, which they have attributed to their cultural values, identity, and belief system that support sustainable consumption. In addition, a significant group stated that they wanted to do sustainable purchases, which highlights the relationship between knowledge, awareness, and practice. Qualitative information also supports the fact that cultural awareness enhances sustainable behaviours and intentions. Taken together, the data points to the fact that although Generation Z shows a high level of sustainability awareness in the context of the small fashion industry, the barriers and obstacles on the structural and economic level still play a vital role in the impediment of the conversion of awareness to actual sustainable consumption.

Implications

These results have important implications for various stakeholder groups and, in particular, for the small fashion brands and industry players that are involved in the manufacture of affordable, sustainable modest clothing in a fast-changing market. The issue with price sensitivity and access becomes the main obstacle to this group. These limitations should be solved by increasing the stylistic variety, the scope of distribution, and the open dialogue that anticipates the cultural value, morality of origin, and environmental advantage of such clothes. Companies prioritising sustainability in cost and accessibility can more easily capitalize on GenZ increased environmental awareness by converting it into meaningful purchasing behaviors, thus balancing the profitability of a business with sustainability in consumer behaviour, enhancing social involvement, and remaining relevant.

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