

The Influence of Brand Identity on the Purchase Intention of Fashion Brands of Beijing High School Students - A Study of Beijing High School Students' Identity with Fast Fashion and Slow Fashion

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Abstract:

This study examines high school students' views on fast and slow fashion brands, highlighting a gap in sustainable brand recognition among adolescents. It focuses on how brand identity influences purchasing intentions in this demographic, providing insights for youth-oriented sustainability strategies in the fashion industry. The research employs a systematic literature review of fast fashion's environmental impacts, slow fashion principles, and adolescent consumer psychology, including preferences and sustainable engagement trends. Additionally, it analyzes secondary data and surveys on brand identity's effects on behavior, revealing trends and gaps in sustainable fashion consumption among youth. The findings show that brand identity significantly impacts students' perceptions and purchasing intentions. Fast fashion's low cost and style variety attract attention, yet environmental concerns are increasing. Conversely, slow fashion appeals to eco-conscious students but lacks awareness. The results indicate that sustainable brand identities can enhance student attitudes, suggesting an opportunity for brands to connect with youth through responsible marketing. This research emphasizes the importance of promoting sustainable values to boost youth engagement as they prioritize environmental responsibility and quality in fashion choices.

Keywords: Brand identity, fast fashion, slow fashion, sustainability, high school students, consumer psychology, literature review, adolescent brand perception

1. Introduction

The fashion industry, particularly the fast fashion sector, has become one of the most environmentally impactful industries globally, raising significant concerns over its long-term sustainability. Fast fashion brands like H&M and Zara have dominated markets by providing affordable, trendy clothing with quick turnover, but this rapid production cycle comes at a high cost to the environment [1][2]. Fast fashion has been linked to a range of environmental issues, including excessive carbon emissions, substantial water usage, and an alarming level of textile waste [3][4]. Recent studies highlight that fast fashion contributes nearly 10% of global carbon emissions and over 90 million tons of waste annually, with most of these materials being non-biodegradable [1][5]. Despite the popularity and accessibility of fast fashion, its environmental costs have sparked debates on the need for more sustainable practices within the industry [6][7].

In contrast, slow fashion has emerged as a sustainable alternative, advocating for quality, durability, and ethical production processes that prioritize environmental care over high-volume, low-cost production [8][9]. Slow fashion encourages consumers to make mindful purchases, focusing on fewer, high-quality items designed to last longer. This approach resonates with an increasing number of environmentally conscious consumers who seek to reduce their ecological footprint by supporting sustainable brands. However, slow fashion remains a relatively new concept, and its adoption is limited compared to the established fast fashion model. Studies suggest that while awareness of slow fashion is growing, many consumers, particularly younger demographics, are not fully familiar with its principles or benefits [10][4].

Among young consumers, especially high school students, the perception of fashion brands plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing intentions and attitudes toward sustainability. High school students represent a unique demographic that is still developing brand preferences and values. Current literature on sustainable fashion consumption tends to focus on adult or millennial consumers, leaving a noticeable gap in understanding how adolescents view fast and slow fashion [2][4]. This age group, increasingly exposed to environmental issues and social media influences, holds substantial potential to influence future fashion trends. However, limited research exists on high school students' awareness and attitudes toward sustainability, brand identity, and ethical consumption practices [8][5].

This research seeks to fill this gap by focusing on high school students' perceptions of fast and slow fashion brands, especially within the context of sustainability. By examining how brand identity influences adolescents'

attitudes and purchasing intentions, this study provides insights into the evolving consumer landscape and the potential to foster sustainable consumption patterns among younger generations.

This study provides valuable insights into high school students' perceptions of fast and slow fashion brands, with a focus on sustainability. As younger consumers increasingly value environmental responsibility, understanding their brand attitudes and purchasing intentions is critical for shaping sustainable fashion practices [1][8]. Fast fashion, characterized by low costs and rapid production, attracts many young consumers but contributes significantly to environmental degradation. Studies indicate that awareness of these negative impacts is growing among youth, who may shift preferences toward brands that reflect sustainable practices [3][9]. In contrast, slow fashion offers an alternative model, emphasizing quality, durability, and eco-friendly processes, which resonates with those interested in responsible consumption [7][5].

This research aims to bridge a gap in the literature by focusing on adolescent consumers, a demographic underrepresented in studies on sustainable fashion. Most existing research centers on adult or millennial consumers, leaving unexplored how high school students—future leaders and consumers—perceive brand identity and sustainability [10][4]. By examining this younger age group's attitudes, this study can inform sustainable branding strategies that appeal to adolescents, thus promoting responsible consumption practices early on. Ultimately, the study contributes to understanding how sustainable brand identity influences youth, offering actionable insights for the fashion industry to align with emerging values in the next generation of consumers.

This study investigates high school students' perceptions of fast and slow fashion brands, focusing on brand identity and sustainability. The research is organized as a comprehensive literature review, aiming to analyze and synthesize existing studies on the environmental impact of fast fashion, the principles of slow fashion, and adolescent consumer psychology. Using systematic review methods, the study examines 10+ peer-reviewed articles and reports to identify gaps in the literature related to young consumers' awareness and preferences in fashion [1][8]. The paper is structured first to outline the environmental challenges of fast fashion and the counteracting strategies of slow fashion, followed by an analysis of how brand identity shapes young consumers' attitudes. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide insights for brands to foster sustainable consumption among youth by understanding their fashion choices' psychological and social drivers.

This case study explores the complex dynamics of brand identity, sustainability, and consumer behavior in the fast

and slow fashion industries, focusing specifically on how high school students perceive and respond to these brands. By examining events, corporate structures, and the geographic focus on Beijing, this study delves into the factors influencing adolescents' purchasing decisions, addressing environmental, social, and psychological aspects based on insights from recent research.

2. Case description

The global fashion industry has faced rising scrutiny for its environmental impact, largely driven by the fast fashion model. This model is built on rapid production, low costs, and a high turnover rate of styles, leading to significant waste, pollution, and resource depletion [1][3]. Major fast fashion brands like H&M and Zara have come under criticism for contributing to unsustainable consumption patterns, prompting a growing consumer demand for eco-friendly alternatives. This scenario set the stage for examining the attitudes and behaviors of young consumers in Beijing toward fast fashion and the contrasting slow fashion movement, which promotes durability, quality, and environmental responsibility [2][8].

Fast fashion companies are structured around maximizing efficiency and minimizing costs. They rely on a global supply chain, often outsourcing labor-intensive stages to countries with low production costs, which can exacerbate environmental and ethical concerns. This operational structure contrasts with slow fashion companies, which prioritize ethical sourcing, local production, and reduced waste [7][8]. Slow fashion brands are often smaller in scale, focusing on high-quality materials, sustainable practices, and limited production runs. The structural differences in these two fashion models underscore the tension between rapid consumer gratification and long-term environmental sustainability.

This case study focuses on Beijing, where high school students form a significant portion of the emerging consumer demographic. These adolescents are increasingly exposed to sustainability issues and are developing brand preferences influenced by social media, peer networks, and educational content on environmental responsibility [6][9]. Studies have shown that younger consumers in urban centers, such as Beijing, are beginning to recognize the importance of sustainable consumption. However, their purchasing decisions often remain influenced by factors such as price sensitivity and peer trends, which are closely associated with the fast fashion model [4][5].

The primary issue examined in this case study is the contrast in brand identity between fast and slow fashion brands and how these identities influence high school students' purchasing behavior. Fast fashion appeals to young

consumers through affordability and trendy designs, making it highly accessible and attractive [1][2]. However, the environmental consequences of fast fashion are severe, and there is an increasing need for brands to adopt sustainable practices [8]. Slow fashion, while promoting sustainability, faces challenges in capturing the attention of young consumers due to its typically higher price points and slower turnover of new styles [7][9].

Addressing these issues is crucial as high school students represent the next generation of consumers, whose choices will significantly impact the future of the fashion industry. By understanding their perceptions of brand identity and sustainability, this study aims to provide insights into how fashion brands can better engage youth in sustainable consumption practices. This case also highlights the potential for education and brand marketing to shift adolescent preferences towards more responsible consumption [4][5]. This case study reveals a complex landscape where fast fashion's appeal competes with the growing awareness of sustainability among young consumers. The findings suggest that while high school students in Beijing are attracted to the convenience and affordability of fast fashion, there is a notable shift in awareness towards environmental impacts [3][8]. Slow fashion brands, with their emphasis on quality and sustainability, hold potential appeal for environmentally conscious students. However, their relatively high price and slower product cycles can be barriers to widespread adoption [7][9].

Potential solutions include targeted educational campaigns and sustainable branding strategies that resonate with young consumers. By integrating sustainability into their brand identity and promoting eco-friendly values, fashion brands can engage this demographic effectively. Furthermore, creating affordable slow fashion options or implementing eco-friendly practices within fast fashion can bridge the gap between accessibility and sustainability [4][5]. Initiatives that emphasize transparency, environmental benefits, and shared social responsibility may foster a stronger brand connection with youth and support the long-term goal of sustainable consumer behavior.

3. Analysis of the Problems

The primary theoretical framework for analyzing high school students' perceptions and responses to fast and slow fashion is rooted in consumer psychology and brand identity theory. Brand identity theory posits that the alignment of a brand's identity with consumer values significantly influences purchasing behavior and brand loyalty [7][4]. For this study, the framework helps in understanding how adolescents form brand preferences based on the values associated with fast and slow fashion. The frame-

work also considers sustainability awareness and ethical consumption, which are increasingly relevant in shaping consumer behavior among younger demographics [8][5]. Through this lens, we can assess how fast and slow fashion brand identity impacts students' purchasing intentions and sustainability choices.

3.1 Issue

3.1.1 Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is characterized by its high-speed production and low costs, which appeal to young consumers seeking trendy, affordable clothing. However, the environmental impact of this industry is profound, contributing significantly to pollution, carbon emissions, and waste [1][3]. Studies show that producing fast fashion garments requires intensive water usage, chemicals, and synthetic and non-biodegradable [4][9]. The vast volume of discarded fast fashion items that end up in landfills further exacerbates environmental degradation.

Despite growing environmental awareness, high school students are often influenced by the affordability and accessibility of fast fashion. Although many young consumers are conscious of sustainability, their purchase decisions are frequently dominated by immediate appeal rather than long-term ecological impact [2][10]. This discrepancy highlights a gap between sustainable values and consumer behavior, suggesting that brands need to integrate more effective sustainability messaging to align with the values of this demographic.

3.1.2 Perceived Value and Accessibility of Slow Fashion

Slow fashion, which focuses on durability, ethical production, and environmental care, presents an alternative to fast fashion. However, slow fashion products typically come with a higher price tag due to quality materials and ethical manufacturing processes [8][7]. This poses a challenge for high school students who may recognize the benefits of sustainable fashion but face financial constraints that limit their access to these products.

Research indicates that while adolescents are interested in sustainable fashion, they often find it financially inaccessible compared to fast fashion [3][9]. For slow fashion brands, this presents a need to strategize ways to make sustainable fashion more appealing and accessible to younger consumers. By offering affordable options or creating youth-targeted campaigns that emphasize quality and durability, slow fashion brands could improve their relevance among adolescents.

3.1.3 : Influence of Peer and Social Media Pressure

The role of social media and peer influence in shaping young consumers' fashion choices cannot be overlooked.

Platforms like Instagram and TikTok promote fast fashion by showcasing trendy, inexpensive outfits that align with current trends. This creates a "micro-trend" culture, encouraging frequent purchases to keep up with ever-changing styles, which aligns closely with the fast fashion business model [4][5].

The influence of social media has been shown to strengthen the appeal of fast fashion among high school students, as these platforms frequently highlight affordability and trendiness over sustainability [6][9]. Slow fashion, by contrast, often lacks the same level of exposure due to its slower product cycle and higher price points. Addressing this issue requires a shift in how slow fashion brands engage with social media. Suppose they can leverage influencers and create engaging content around the concepts of quality, sustainability, and long-term value. In that case, they may counterbalance the prevailing fast fashion narrative and make sustainable choices more attractive to young consumers.

3.2 Conclusion

The analysis of these three issues—environmental impact, perceived value and accessibility, and social media influence—reveals significant barriers to promoting sustainable fashion among high school students. While adolescents show increasing awareness of sustainability, their fashion choices remain influenced by the affordability, accessibility, and social visibility of fast fashion. This analysis underscores the need for strategies that integrate sustainability into brand identity to resonate with youth values, as well as the importance of accessibility and effective social media engagement to shift preferences toward more sustainable consumption patterns.

By addressing these issues, fashion brands can better align with the values of younger consumers and support a shift towards sustainability in the industry. This approach holds the potential to bridge the gap between the growing environmental awareness among youth and their actual purchasing behaviors, fostering a more sustainable fashion culture in the long term.

4. Suggestions

4.1 Enhance Sustainable Branding Through Education

One effective approach for fashion brands is to educate young consumers on the environmental impact of their purchasing choices, especially concerning fast fashion. Research shows that increased awareness of sustainability issues can significantly influence young consumers' atti-

tudes and behaviors [1][4]. Adolescents are more likely to make conscious purchasing decisions if they understand the environmental harm caused by fast fashion's wasteful practices. By creating educational campaigns or collaborating with schools, brands can raise awareness among high school students, fostering a more environmentally responsible attitude towards fashion consumption. This aligns with the broader push for sustainability education, which has shown promising results in shifting youth behavior towards eco-friendly choices [8]. This approach not only benefits the environment but also enhances the brand's reputation among environmentally conscious consumers, potentially leading to a stronger, more sustainable customer base.

4.2 Develop Affordable Sustainable Options

Fashion brands should strive to make sustainable options more accessible by offering affordable, eco-friendly alternatives tailored to young consumers. One major barrier to slow fashion adoption among high school students is the higher price point, which often makes it inaccessible to budget-conscious youth [3][7]. Studies indicate that affordability remains a critical factor in young consumers' purchasing decisions, even when they prefer sustainable options [9]. By innovating production methods, brands can reduce costs for sustainable products without compromising on quality. Examples include using recycled materials or streamlining the supply chain to lower expenses. This encourages sustainable practices and enables adolescents to participate in responsible consumption, supporting a shift away from fast fashion's throwaway culture. Affordable sustainable options will bridge the gap between high school students' environmental values and their purchasing power, making eco-conscious fashion more attainable.

4.3 Leverage Social Media for Sustainable Influence

Utilizing social media to promote sustainable fashion values is essential, as it is a primary channel through which young consumers receive fashion information. Social media heavily influences adolescent behavior, often driving fast fashion's popularity through trend-focused content [6][4]. However, the same platforms can be powerful tools for promoting sustainable fashion ideals if used strategically. Brands can collaborate with influencers who advocate for sustainability to create content that highlights the benefits of slow fashion. By presenting eco-friendly fashion as stylish and socially responsible, brands can reshape youth perceptions and make sustainability more appealing [10][5]. This strategy aligns sustainability with social

desirability, fostering a cultural shift towards responsible consumption among young consumers who are active on social media platforms.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the significant impact of brand identity on high school students' perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding fast and slow fashion. Fast fashion, with its affordability and frequent style updates, continues to attract adolescent consumers. However, the study reveals that students are increasingly aware of the environmental issues associated with fast fashion, including waste and pollution from rapid production cycles. This awareness has led to a rising interest in slow fashion, which is valued for its emphasis on quality, durability, and environmental responsibility. Yet, slow fashion remains less accessible to students due to higher costs and slower trend cycles, limiting its appeal in comparison to fast fashion. To address these challenges, brands can work to bridge the gap between affordability and sustainability by developing eco-friendly yet cost-effective options for young consumers. Additionally, educational campaigns that emphasize the environmental benefits of slow fashion could help shift perceptions, making sustainable choices more attractive to adolescents. By focusing on accessibility and awareness, fashion brands can align better with the values of this demographic, fostering a shift toward responsible consumption behaviors among high school students.

This study contributes to the existing literature by focusing on an underrepresented demographic—high school students—and their perceptions of sustainability in fashion. It provides valuable insights for brands seeking to engage younger consumers through sustainable practices, as well as for policymakers aiming to promote responsible consumption. The study serves as a reference for strategies that could make sustainable fashion more appealing and accessible to younger audiences, supporting the industry's shift toward eco-conscious practices.

Future research could explore ways further to lower the cost of sustainable fashion for young consumers and examine the long-term impact of sustainability education on purchasing behavior. Additionally, investigating the role of social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion could yield valuable insights for the industry.

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