



**Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences**

**The Role of Social Sustainability on Consumer Purchase  
Intention for Fashion Products**

The Thesis of the PhD Dissertation

Seyyed Amir Vafaei

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## Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences

**Name of Doctoral School:** Doctoral School of Economic and Regional Sciences

**Discipline:** Management and Business Administration Sciences

**Head of Doctoral School:** Prof. Dr. H.c. Popp, József, DSC  
Corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences  
MATE,  
Institute of Economic Sciences

**Supervisor(s):** Prof. Dr. Farkasné Fekete, Mária, PhD  
MATE, Institute of Economic Sciences

.....  
**Approval of Head of Doctoral School**

.....  
**Approval of Supervisor(s)**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The term sustainability is no longer an issue that can be easily bypassed and can be described as the equal and well-organized division of resources inter-generationally and intra-generationally along with the processes of socio-economic events following the limitations of an ecosystem (VAF AEI et al., 2019). There are three primary disciplines set for sustainability, i.e., social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Social sustainability can be described as an arrangement of quality life for the existing generation, depicting the term "social" followed by maintaining this quality of living for the coming generations, defining the term "sustainability". Moreover, the social sustainability must be compatible with protecting the environment (JEROME et al., 2020). It can be concluded that social sustainability aims at protecting social righteousness, justice, and equality by following a series of actions (DONATO et al., 2020).

Previously, sustainability was not a concerning aspect in the fashion industry, but now with the changing trends, where significant considerations have been laid towards ethical and environmental norms, sustainability has gained more attention (DONATO et al., 2020). For a long period of time, the fashion industry is observed as the highly destructive sector for the environment preceded by the oil industry (MOORHOUSE & MOORHOUSE, 2017), and apart from the fashion industry's gross economic success, it has imparted a negative impact on society and the environment, including excessive utilization of natural resources, waste production, and ultimately destroying the environment (GRAZZINI, 2020).

In fact, marketing strategies have been found in contradiction with sustainability. But currently researchers are now emphasizing the link between sustainability and marketing strategies, especially in regards of consumer-centric approaches (VAF AEI et al., 2016). Consumers also play a fundamental role in connection between sustainability and any organizations. They feel a strong responsibility to involve themselves in sustainable purchasing process which includes the environmental and social actions and emphasizes the needs and demands of coming generations (VERBEKE et al., 2007).

Therefore, for investigating the relationship between the sense of social responsibility and increasing purchase intention, this study intends to address both social sustainability and consumer behaviour for fashion products.

## 1.1. Problem Statement

In September 2015, the United Nations Member States agreed to set a path for sustainable development by approving the 2030 sustainable development agenda. This agenda contains 17 goals and 169 targets, in three sustainable dimensions, meaning social, economic, and environmental, that must be achieved by 2030. These goals and targets set the framework for a joint action entitled "to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity" that must be implemented by all countries and beneficiaries (UNITED NATIONS, 2015).

**Table 1. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

<b>1. No Poverty</b>	<b>2. No Hunger</b>	<b>3. Good Health</b>	<b>4. Quality Education</b>	<b>5. Gender Equality</b>	<b>6. Clean Water &amp; Sanitation</b>
<b>7. Renewable Energy</b>	<b>8. Good Jobs &amp; Economic Growth</b>	<b>9. Innovation &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<b>10. Reduced Inequalities</b>	<b>11. Sustainable Cities &amp; Communities</b>	<b>12. Responsible Consumption &amp; Production Patterns</b>
<b>13. Climate Action</b>	<b>14. Life below Water</b>	<b>15. Life on Land</b>	<b>16. Peace &amp; Justice</b>	<b>17. Partnerships for the Goals</b>	

Source: Author's own construction based on UNITED NATIONS (2015) assembly

Based on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) presented in Table 1, sustainable consumption and production patterns is one of the main goals which should be achieved by 2030. Therefore, there is a need to change both production patterns and the way how people buy and consume products.

Unfortunately, sustainability and fashion seem to be two opposite terminologies. Fashion has been linked with the high living and trendy, yet with the lower lifecycle. However, sustainability has been linked with ethical norms and long-lasting products (MEINKE & MUSTORP, 2017).

Presently, a trend has shifted towards sustainability in the fashion industry. However, this shift can be successfully adopted only if consumers understand and promote sustainable fashion (MCNEILL & MOORE, 2015). To put it all together, to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns according to the 12<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal in fashion industry, there is a need to study how people can get motivated to change their consumption and purchasing patterns by considering social sustainability issues. Therefore, this research aims to identify the impact of social sustainability on consumer purchase intention for fashion products.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

On the one hand, consumer behaviour significantly impacts any company's products, marketing strategies, and services (WANG, 2015) and psychological factors influence consumer behaviour, ultimately affecting the marketing strategies (KOTLER & ARMSTRONG, 2012). Consumer intention is one of the most important psychological factors which has significant relationship with marketing strategies (MAHMOUD, 2018). Hence, understating consumer intention regarding purchase is of great significance for every company while planning marketing strategies.

On the other hand, studies have revealed consumers satisfaction and sustainability approaches as the highly significant aspects of success and strategic resources that ultimately result in competitive advantages and higher economic stability (PARIDA & WINCENT, 2019). Since most of the research in fashion industry focus on environmental dimension (SOLINO et al., 2020), consequently, this study attempts to evaluate the link between consumer behaviour and social sustainability and research objectives can be described as:

### ❖ Main objective:

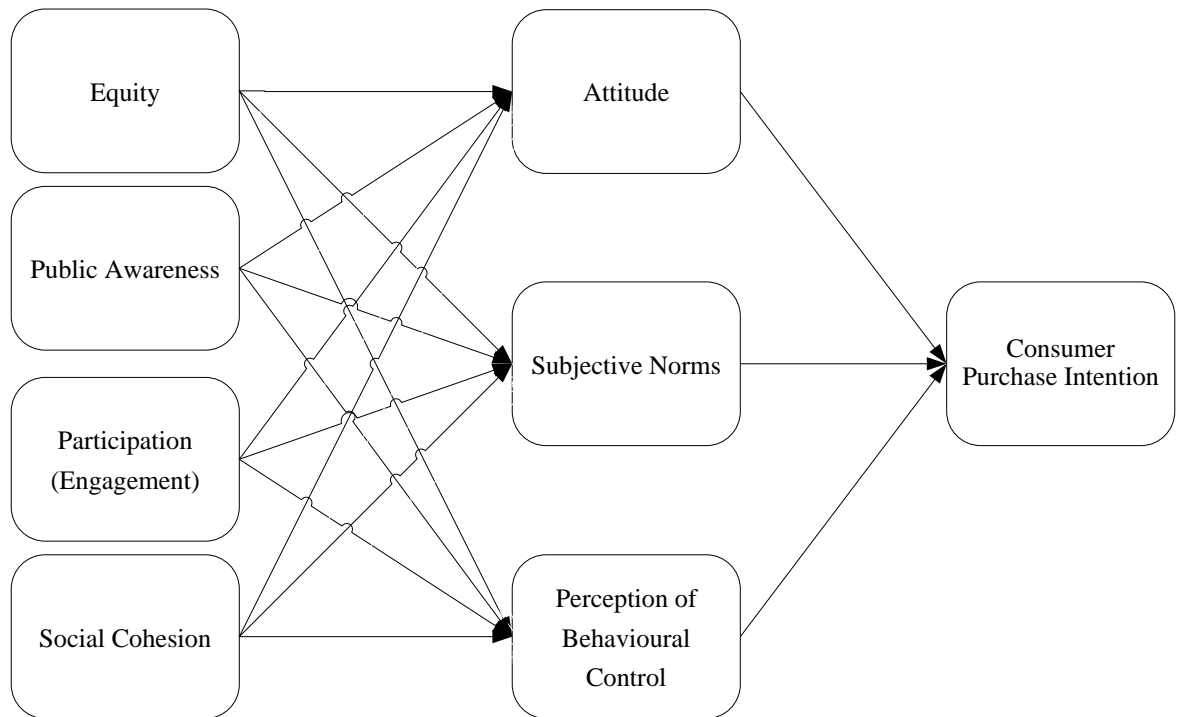
1. Review the effect of social sustainability on consumer purchase intention for fashion products

### ❖ Specific objectives:

1. Determination of the relationship between social sustainability and intentional variables
2. Assessment of factors which may affect purchase decisions for fashion products

## **1.3. Scientific Research Model**

According to MURPHY (2012) study, social sustainability has four dimensions, including equity, public awareness, participation (engagement), and social cohesion. In addition, consumer purchase intention is affected by three factors which are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control based to the theory of planned behaviour developed by AJZEN (1991). The aim of the present study was to develop a comprehensive model of the which interaction between social sustainability and consumer purchase intention that is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Research Model**

Source: Author's own construction

#### 1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research questions should be formulated and expressed based on the research objectives and variables. Moreover, proper and principled writing of hypotheses is one of the most important steps in any studies. This research consists of 4 research questions and consequently four main hypotheses in order to answer these questions, along with fifteen sub-hypotheses.

➤ Research questions:

- ❖ Q1. What effect does the perception of social equity have on the purchase intention of Hungarian students for fashion products?
- ❖ Q2. How can ethical and social awareness among Hungarian students develop their intention to avoid unsustainable fashion products?
- ❖ Q3. What effect do different participation (engagement) approaches have on the sustainable garments purchase intention of Hungarian students?
- ❖ Q4. What impact have social cohesion had on the sustainable purchase intention of students in Hungary?

- Main hypotheses:
- ❖ H1. Social equity positively influences consumer intention for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H2. Public awareness of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H3. Participation (engagement) of consumers positively influence their intention for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H4. Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention for sustainable garments
- Sub-hypotheses:
- ❖ H5. Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their sustainable attitude for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H6. Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H7. Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H8. Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their green attitude for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H9. Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H10. Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H11. Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their green attitude for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H12. Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H13. Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H14. Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer green attitude for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H15. Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H16. Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments



- ❖ H17. Green attitude of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H18. Green subjective norms of consumers positively influence their intention for purchasing sustainable garments
- ❖ H19. Green perceived behavioural control of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This chapter first tries to explain the method and type of research following by research population, method which has been used for sampling and data collection elaborated. Furthermore, variables are described in detail. Different techniques used for analysing data is the next topic.

### **2.1. Method and Type of the Research**

As previously discussed, this study is undertaken to better comprehend the role of social sustainability and consumer purchase intention. Hence, it is categorised as an explanatory research.

Moreover, this is an empirical study which tries to provide some hints for policy makers, managers and even consumers. consequently, it is applied research. In addition, this study provides statistical results.

Therefore, this study is:

- Applied Research based on its type.
- Exploratory research according to its purpose.
- Quantitative method due to techniques used.

### **2.2. Research Population and Sampling**

The population of this study consists of all Hungarian students. In fact, students are known as the main consumers not far away and are also in a higher position than the average level of society (PENA-CEREZO et al., 2019).

In this study, “Convenience Sampling” has been used. Convenience sampling (also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling) is a type of nonprobability sampling. Convenience sampling tries to reach those people, who are effortlessly attainable, accessible at a provided time frame, and even live near. Moreover, those who voluntarily participate also become a part of the research project in this type of sampling (ETIKAN, 2016).

The questionnaires were distributed among the students in Hungary via Internet. Probably the most important and obvious advantages of using online questionnaires are saving time, money, and having access to more people since there is no geographical boundaries (WRIGHT, 2005).

### **2.3. Questionnaire Design and Development**

Since there is no specific questionnaire which evaluates the role of social sustainability on consumer purchase intention, the questionnaire was developed by author based on different questionnaires retrieved from several scientific articles and studies for this research.

The final draft of the questionnaire consists of three sections and has 46 questions all together which starts with demographic questions such as gender, age, qualification degree etc. After socio-demographic questions, participants were asked to indicate how important seven factors including price, style, quality, brand, environmental & social friendly aspect, others' opinion, and social media impact are when they purchase fashion products. The main reason for these questions is to understand their attitude towards the common issues.

Then the main part comes where it consists of 28 questions which evaluates the role of social sustainability on consumer purchase intention for fashion products. The questions are closed questions based on the Likert scale, which includes five options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The scoring method is from 1 for “Strongly Disagree” to 5 for “Strongly Agree”, respectively.

#### **2.3.1. Measurement Items**

Preparing a quality questionnaire plays a major role in social science studies. Since no research has been done on this subject until the time of writing, no designed questionnaire had been found. Set out in Table 2, the scales of the constructs were adopted from existing literature but modified to fit the context of this research.

**Table 2 Constructs and Items Used in the Questionnaire**

	Construct	Items for each construct	Sources		
Social Sustainability	Equity	EQ1	Fair compensation for garments producers is important to me when I buy garments	Adapted from JUNG& JIN, 2016	
		EQ2	I am concerned about fair trade when I buy garment		
		EQ3	I am concerned about the working conditions of producers when I buy garment		
	Public awareness	PA1	It is important to me that the garments I buy are produced in safe working conditions & in a way that is not harmful to the environment.	Adapted from SHEN et al., 2013; FASHION REVOLUTION CIC (2018)	
		PA2	Fashion brands should be required by law to provide information about the social impacts of their business		
		PA3	I am interested in learning about what fashion brands do to improve the lives of people in the societies where they manufacture their products		
		PA4	I am interested in apparel products made by a company that follows standards of international labour, such as reasonable work hours, no child labour, the right to unionize, a fair living wage		
	Participation (Engagement)	PE1	I like to know more about the ways my consumption habits may contribute to social sustainability in fashion industry	Adapted from PILGRIMIENÉ et al., (2020)	
		PE2	I feel better person if I can contribute to the social sustainability		
		PE3	I like to discuss the issues about social sustainability rights with others, sharing ideas and recommendations		
	Social Cohesion	SC1	I feel more interested in recycling my used garments if I can support charity & other organizations by this	Adapted from WANG (2012); PREUIT (2016); SARICAM et al. (2017)	
		SC2	I usually go shopping by considering human rights in my mind		
		SC3	I should tell my family & friends about sustainable fashion products		
		SC4	Purchasing the locally made garments, it is like investing in local community		
	Consumer Purchase Intention	Attitude	AT1	The consumers are responsible to make the change towards a sustainable & ethical production & consumption	Adapted from KJELLEVAND & KJELLEVAND (2018); CEYLAN (2019)
			AT2	I believe my actions and choices makes an impact on fashion industry	
AT3			I have an ethical obligation to purchase eco-friendly garments		
Subjective norms		SN1	Most people who are important to me think I should purchase sustainable fashion garments	Adapted from PREUIT, 2016	
		SN2	The people in my life whose opinions I value would approve of my purchase of sustainable fashion products		
		SN3	Most people who are important to me are concerned about whether fashion products are sustainable or not		
		SN4	It is necessary to share my knowledge about social sustainability on social media		
Perceived behavioural control		PB1	My behaviour can have a positive effect on purchasing sustainable fashion products	Adapted from MANCHIRAJU (2014); ZHANG et al. (2019)	
		PB2	I have opportunities and time for searching and purchasing green garments		
		PB3	I am free to choose sustainable garments when purchasing		
		PB4	*Since one person cannot have any effect upon sustainable issues, it does not make any difference what I do		
Green purchase intention (motivation)		GP1	I want to make a special effort to buy those garments that are made from ecological materials	Adapted from ABBASI et al. (2013); LU et al. (2013)	
		GP2	When I have a choice between two equal garments, I purchase the one less harmful to other people and the environment		
		GP3	I intend to purchase green garments because of its social and environmental concern.		

Source: Author's own construction based on previous studies

### **2.3.2. Sample Size**

For calculating the sample size, “priori sample size model” has been used in this study. This method calculates the minimum sample size based on specified alpha error. Parameters and their values for the sample size calculation are given below.

- Anticipated effect size: 0.3
- Desired statistical power level: 0.95
- Number of latent variables: 8
- Number of observed variables: 28
- Probability level (p-value): 0.05

The sample size calculated by using “Free Statistics Calculators” V. 4.0 and results are presented below.

- ✓ Minimum sample size to detect effect: 256
- ✓ Minimum sample size for model structure: 138
- ✓ Recommended minimum sample size: 256

Therefore, at least 256 samples are needed for this study. Since more data could give more credibility to any study, during the study time frame (January 23<sup>rd</sup> till February 23<sup>rd</sup>), 571 samples (responses to the designed questionnaire) were collected.

## **2.4. Data Analysis**

Both descriptive and inferential analytical methods were used to analyse the collected primary data. SmartPLS v. 3.3.3. was used to do partial least square analysing based on structural equation modelling to test the formulated hypotheses and answer the research questions. Moreover, SPSS21 has been used for descriptive analyses.

### **2.4.1. Data Preparation**

For preparing statistical reports, one of the main issues which researcher should deal with is summarization, because the purpose of preparing reports is to provide compressed information from all data. One of the most common used software for data summarization is SPSS which developed by IBM. In general, SPSS is an analytical software which receives data in various formats such as questionnaires and can show the output in the form of a table or chart to be easily analysed and reviewed. In the present study, the following analyses were performed with the help of this software (SPSS v. 21):

- ❖ Assessing Questionnaire Reliability
- ❖ Socio-Demographics Analyses
- ❖ Calculating Statistical Summaries such as Tables and Graphs
- ❖ Making Cumulative Relative Frequency Tables
- ❖ Mann–Whitney U Test for Assessing Gender Differences

#### 2.4.2. Partial Least Square Based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM)

Currently, Structural Equation Model (SEM) is one of the main analyses in social sciences especially in field of marketing. In fact, this method is a very robust multivariate analysis of the multivariate regression family that let the researchers to test a set of regression equations simultaneously, mainly, when there are hidden variables in order to figure out the relationships between them (SARSTEDT et al., 2014). In fact, SEM enables researchers to examine and evaluate latent variables measured by their indices (MOHAMAD et al., 2019).

Basically, there are two common approaches to evaluate a relationship in SEM models:

1. Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM)
2. Variance-Based SEM (VB-SEM) (HAIR JR. J. F. et al., 2017).

Each approach has its own usage at it is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Structural Equation Model Approaches & Usages**

<b>Structural Equation Model</b>	
<b>Approach</b>	<b>Usage</b>
Covariance-Based SEM	Confirming established theory
Variance-Based SEM	Predictive approach for new model or theory

Source: Author’s own construction based on HAIR JR. J. F. et al., 2017

Partial Least Squares (PLS) is the most prevailing kind of VB-SEM (MOHAMAD et al., 2019). It is a non-parametric method that is developed from the principal component regression. This method is suitable substitute for structural equation modelling since it is less sensitive to sample size and does not require data to be normal. It is used when the number of compounds is less than the number of variables. (PETER et al., 2018). Moreover, PLS SEM is mainly used for testing new models and approaches. Table 4 provides some similar studies that researcher(s) used the same method (PLS SEM) for statistical analyses.

**Table 4. Previous Literature Relevant to Purchase Intention Using PLS-SEM Method**

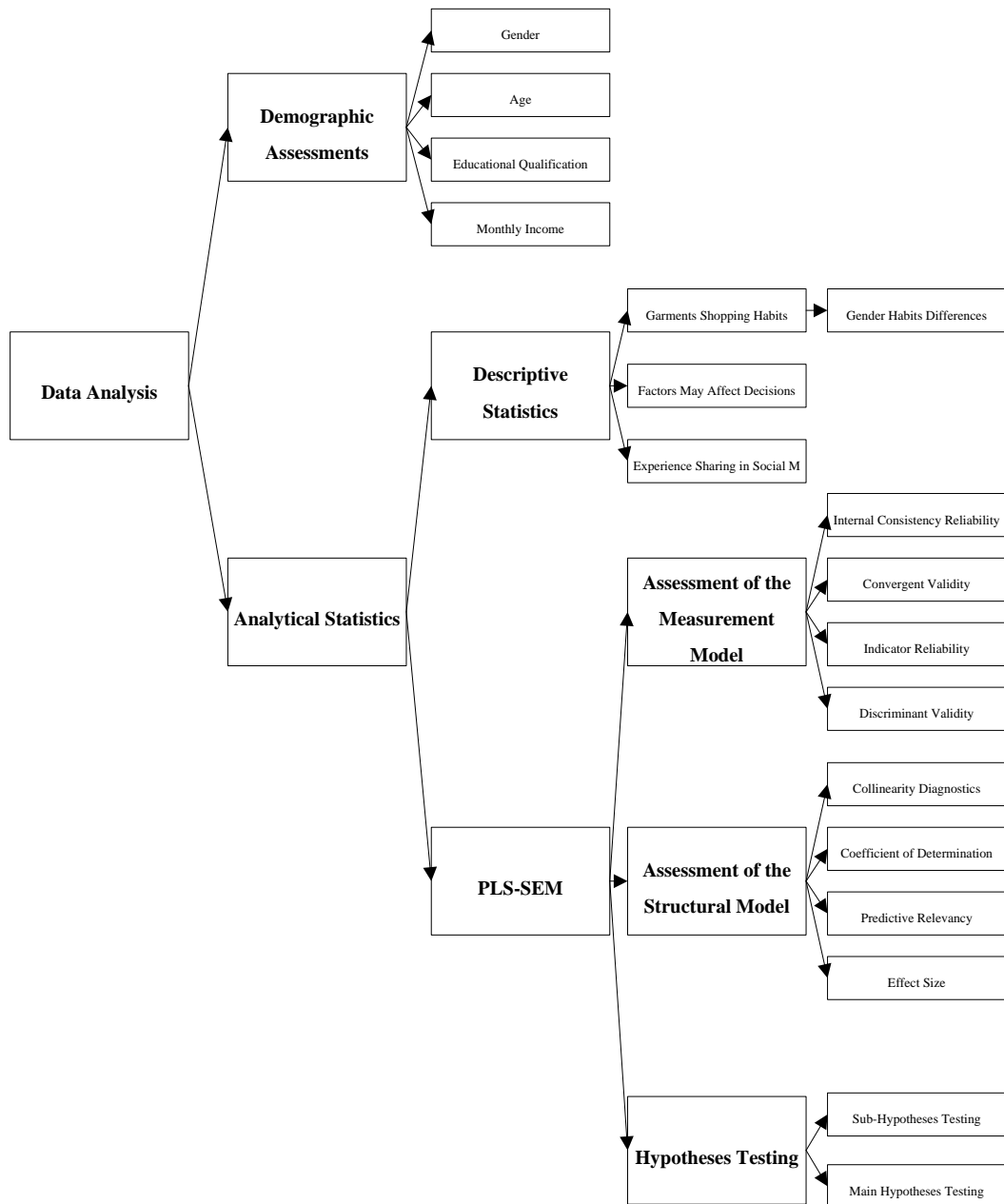
<b>Research Topic</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>
Predicting Consumer Purchase Intention on Fashion Products in Online Retailer: Integration of Self Determination Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior	WIDYARINI & GUNAWAN	2017
Investigating Causes and Consequences of Purchase Intention of Luxury Fashion	SALEM & CHAICHI	2018
Consumer attitude and purchase intention towards organic textile products	ABRAR et al.	2018
How Social Capital Impacts the Purchase Intention of Sustainable Fashion Products	KIM & KANG	2020
Millennial Consumers' Purchase Intention for Eco-Fashion Apparel: A Study from Southern China	ZHU	2021

Source: Author's own construction

Therefore, since this study has 8 latent variables, data collected are not normal, has an exploratory purpose, PLS SEM model has been used for developing research framework. Moreover, as presented in Table 4, recent similar studies relevant to the purchase intention also used the same method.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In fact, data analysis is one of the main bases of any study and research. In this section, those specific analyses are going to be described, which have been performed to answer the root of this research and decide whether to support or reject the hypotheses. Statistical data analysis flowchart is shown in Figure 2. This flowchart provides those steps which should be taken to provide valid results for this study.



**Figure 2. Statistical Data Analysis Flowchart**

Source: Author’s own construction



### 3.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

571 respondent's data collected during the research time frame by distributing the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were women. Out of the 571 respondents, 345 were females, which is around 60% and the male participants accounted for 40% of the total respondents. The age distribution of survey respondents is given in the Table 5. The highest frequency is related to students between 18 to 21 years old.

**Table 5. Age Group of the Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	250	43.8%
22-25	176	30.8%
26-29	75	13.1%
30-33	33	5.8%
34 and above	37	6.5%
Total	571	100%

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

The information given in Table 6 is related to how the respondents are distributed according to the level of education. The highest percentage of respondents are studying their bachelor's degree.

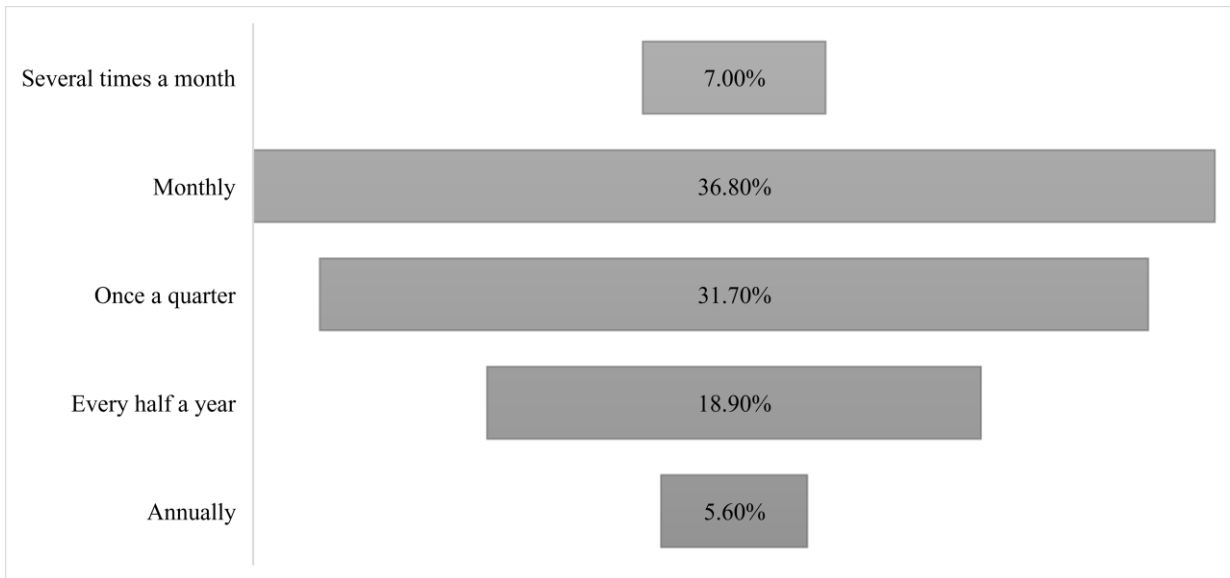
**Table 6. Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
BSc student	445	77.90%
MSc student	94	16.50%
PhD student	32	5.60%
Total	571	100%

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

### 3.2. Assessment of Respondents' Habits Towards Garments Shopping

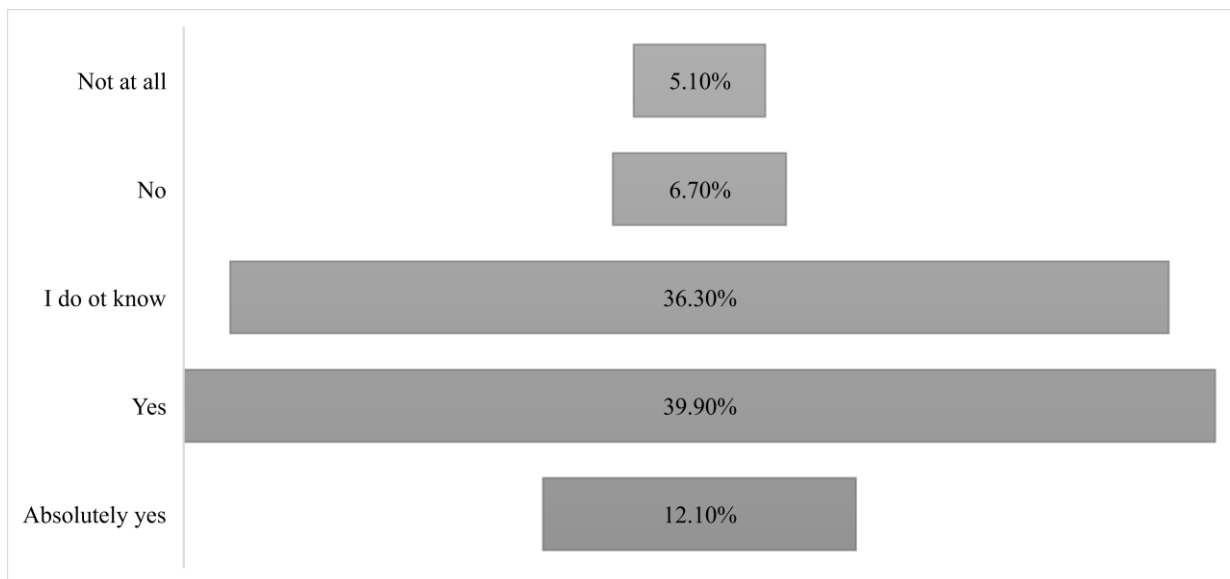
To analyse respondents shopping frequency, they have been asked how often they purchase garments. Most of the respondents, usually buy garments on a monthly (~ 37%) or every three months basis (~ 32%). Figure 3 summarises the related results.



**Figure 3. Garments Buying Frequency**

Source: Author’s own work based on SPSS 21 Results

Interestingly, many respondents are interested in buying green garments. Almost 52% of them (those who said “yes” or “absolutely yes”) are willing to buy green apparel in order to improve sustainable development in this industry. Figure 4 summarises the results.



**Figure 4. Interested in Green Garments**

Source: Author’s own work based on SPSS 21 Results

### 3.3. Assessment of the Gender Habits Differences Towards Garments Shopping

The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between genders (male and female) regarding their garments shopping habits. The null hypothesis for the Mann-Whitney test in this study is that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents towards their garments shopping habits.

**Table 7. Gender Habits Differences Towards Garments Buying Frequency**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z Statistics</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Male	226	336.04	75944				
Female	345	253.22	87362				
Results				27677	87362	-6.145	0.000

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

Based on the results illustrated in Table 7, there is a difference between shopping frequency between female and male. By combining Figure 3 and Table 7, we can conclude that women are more often buy garments comparing men.

**Table 8. Gender Habits Differences Towards Green Garments Shopping**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z Statistics</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Male	226	239.89	54216				
Female	345	316.20	109090				
Results				28565	54216	-5.741	0.000

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

Tables 8 shows there is a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in purchasing green garments. Women are more willing to purchase green garments.

### **3.4. Assessment of Factors Which May Affect Respondents' Purchase Decisions for Fashion Products**

During this study, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of 7 items when they are buying any garments. Price, style, quality, brand, environmental & social friendly, others' opinion, and social media impact are those items which have been asked.

A comprehensive overview of the factors may influence the respondents' purchase decisions for buying fashion products are provided in Table 9. The scale ranges from extremely not important, to very important based on the 5-point Likert scale.

**Table 9. Frequency of Factors that May Affect Respondents' Purchase Decisions**

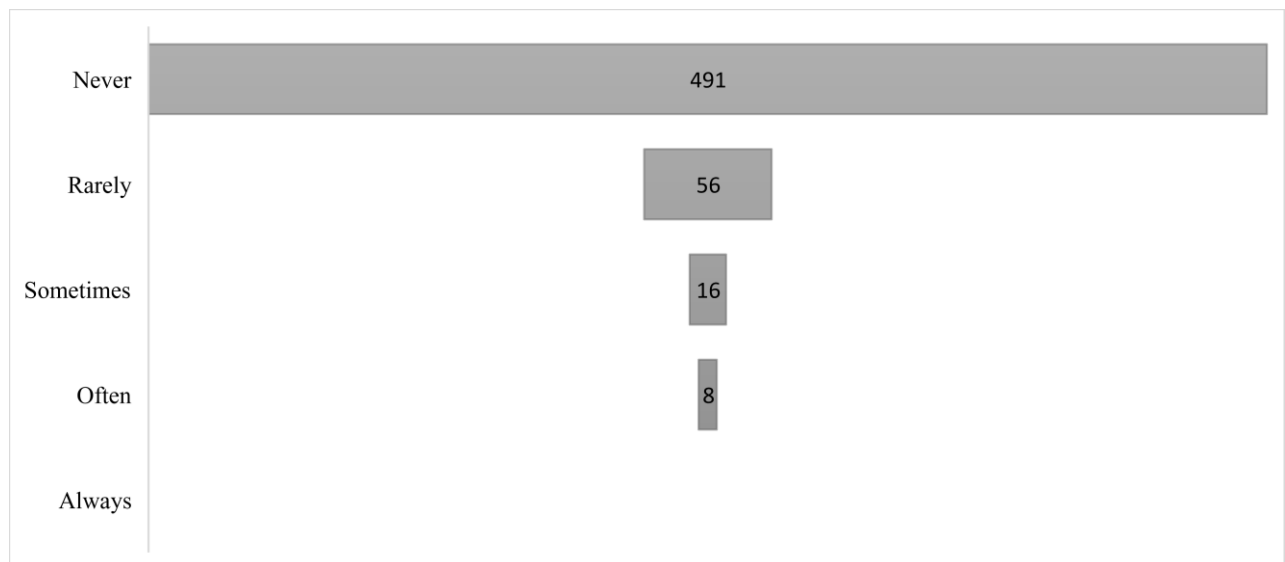
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Slightly important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Fairly important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Price</b>	10	46	221	172	122	<b><u>3.61</u></b>
<b>Style</b>	6	31	170	201	163	<b><u>3.85</u></b>
<b>Quality</b>	1	18	157	224	171	<b><u>3.96</u></b>
<b>Brand</b>	125	230	149	43	24	<b><u>2.32</u></b>
<b>Environmental &amp; Social Friendly</b>	48	217	212	70	24	<b><u>2.66</u></b>
<b>Others' Opinion</b>	115	211	168	55	22	<b><u>2.41</u></b>
<b>Social Media Impact</b>	257	178	89	37	10	<b><u>1.89</u></b>

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

Among 7 factors, only price, style and quality have a higher average (mean) than three and rest got less than this value. Therefore, it leads to the conclusion that brand, environmental and social friendly concern, others' opinion, and social media impact belong to those factors that cannot affect the respondents purchase decision strongly.

### **3.5. Assessment of Experience Sharing in Online Social Networks**

Respondents were asked how often they share their experiences or knowledge about clothing or fashion trends on social media. In fact, the tests delivered some interesting results which present in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. Experience Sharing in Online Social Networks Assessment**

Source: Author's own work based on SPSS 21 Results

Referring to Figure 5., more than 86% of the respondents never shared their experiences about fashion trends and any type of apparels in online social media.

### 3.5.1. Sub-Hypotheses Testing

This study includes 15 sub-hypotheses. Sub-hypotheses results based on the bootstrapping methods are given in Table 10.

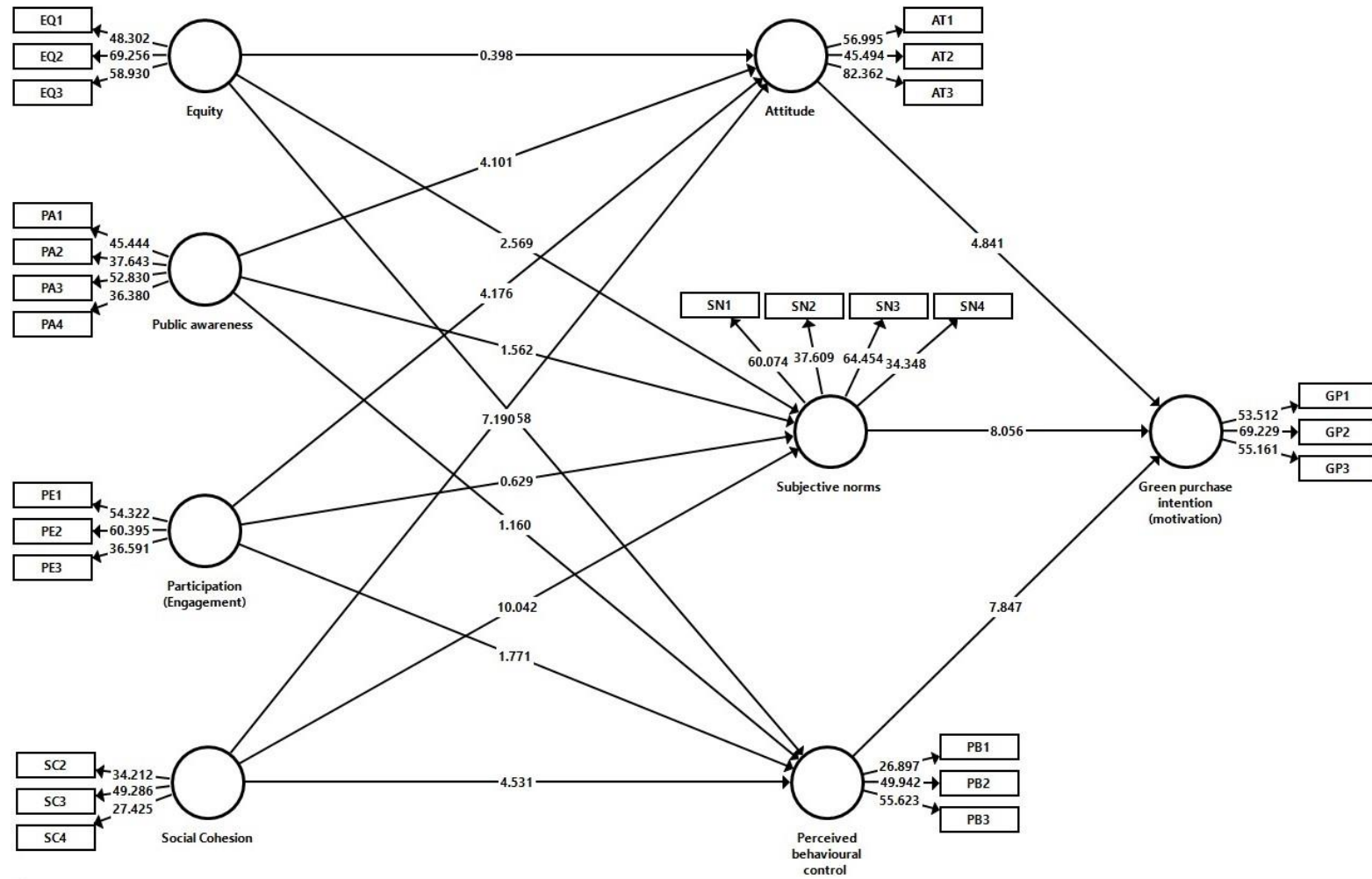
**Table 10. Path Coefficients Results for the Sub-Hypotheses**

H#	Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
H5	EQ -> AT	0.018	0.016	0.046	0.398	<b>0.691</b>
H6	EQ -> SN	0.123	0.125	0.048	2.569	0.010
H7	EQ -> PB	0.236	0.233	0.061	3.858	0.000
H8	PA -> AT	0.229	0.232	0.056	4.101	0.000
H9	PA -> SN	0.093	0.089	0.059	1.562	<b>0.119</b>
H10	PA -> PB	0.079	0.086	0.068	1.160	<b>0.247</b>
H11	PE -> AT	0.203	0.205	0.049	4.176	0.000
H12	PE -> SN	0.029	0.032	0.046	0.629	<b>0.530</b>
H13	PE -> PB	0.106	0.104	0.060	1.771	<b>0.077</b>
H14	SC -> AT	0.376	0.375	0.052	7.190	0.000
H15	SC -> SN	0.475	0.475	0.047	10.042	0.000
H16	SC -> PB	0.263	0.261	0.058	4.531	0.000
H17	AT -> GP	0.212	0.212	0.044	4.841	0.000
H18	SN -> GP	0.350	0.349	0.043	8.056	0.000
H19	PB -> GP	0.297	0.297	0.038	7.847	0.000

Source: Author's own work based on SmartPLS results

According to Table 10, the influence of social equity on consumer attitude ( $\beta = 0.018$ ,  $T = 0.398$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), consumer public awareness on subjective norms and perceived behavioural control ( $\beta = 0.093$  &  $0.79$ ,  $T = 1.562$  &  $1.160$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and consumer participation (engagement) on subjective norms and perceived behavioural control ( $\beta = 0.029$  &  $0.106$ ,  $T = 0.629$  &  $1.771$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) are not significant. Hence, the hypotheses H5, H9, H10, H12 and H13 are rejected and the rest of them are supported. It is worth mentioning that there is a possibility for H9 to get supported by increasing the number of respondents since "T Statistics" is quite close to 1.96.

The structural model with the bootstrapping results and T statistics is given in figure 6. Moreover, summary of the sub-hypotheses test results is given in Table 11.



**Figure 6. Bootstrapping Results for the Sub-Hypotheses Testing with 500 iterations**

Source: Author`s Own Work using SmartPLS

**Table 11. Summary of the Sub-Hypotheses Test results**

<b>Hypotheses</b>		<b>Results</b>
H5	Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their sustainable attitude for purchasing sustainable garments	Not Supported
H6	Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H7	Social equity perception of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H8	Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their green attitude for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H9	Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments	Not Supported
H10	Public awareness of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments	Not Supported
H11	Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their green attitude for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H12	Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments	Not Supported
H13	Participation (engagement) of consumers has a positive impact on their perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments	Not Supported
H14	Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer sustainable attitude for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H15	Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer subjective norms for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H16	Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer perceived behavioural control for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H17	Green attitude of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H18	Green subjective norms of consumers positively influence their intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H19	Green perceived behavioural control of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>

Source: Author's own construction

### 3.5.2. Main Hypotheses Testing (Mediation Analysis)

One of the main challenges in variance-based statistics is to specify multiple “mediation effect”. In fact, mediation effect tries to follow and explain the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable by considering third (mediator) variable (CEPEDA-CARRION et al., 2018). SmartPLS by having few specific features, let the researcher to analyse the indirect effect of each variable. The results of the specific indirect effects are given in Table 12.

**Table 3. Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)**

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
EQ ->AT -> GP	0.004	0.004	0.010	0.385	<b>0.700</b>
EQ -> SN -> GP	0.043	0.044	0.018	2.437	0.015
EQ -> PB -> GP	0.070	0.069	0.020	3.497	0.001
PA ->AT -> GP	0.048	0.049	0.016	3.048	0.002
PA-> SN -> GP	0.032	0.031	0.021	1.511	<b>0.131</b>
PA -> PB -> GP	0.024	0.026	0.021	1.113	<b>0.266</b>
PE ->AT -> GP	0.043	0.043	0.014	3.132	0.002
PE -> SN -> GP	0.010	0.012	0.017	0.619	<b>0.536</b>
PE -> PB -> GP	0.031	0.031	0.019	1.681	<b>0.093</b>
SC ->AT -> GP	0.080	0.080	0.020	3.959	0.000
SC -> SN -> GP	0.166	0.166	0.026	6.338	0.000
SC -> PB -> GP	0.078	0.077	0.018	4.374	0.000

Source: Author’s own work based on SmartPLS results

In this study, three latent variables (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) play the role of moderator in the relationship between social sustainability and green purchase intention. In fact, out of twelve paths, 5 of them do not have indirect effect on green purchase intention, including:

- × Equity – Attitude – Green Purchase Intention
- × Public Awareness – Subjective Norms – Green Purchase Intention
- × Public Awareness – Perceived Behavioural Control – Green Purchase Intention
- × Participation – Subjective Norms – Green Purchase Intention
- × Participation (Engagement) – Perceived Behavioural Control – Green Purchase Intention



In order to assess the main hypotheses, “total indirect effects” of each social sustainability elements were evaluated. Results presented in Table 13.

**Table 4. Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)**

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
EQ -> GP	0.117	0.116	0.033	3.537	0.000
PA -> GP	0.104	0.107	0.039	2.709	0.007
PE -> GP	0.085	0.086	0.031	2.686	0.007
SC -> GP	0.324	0.323	0.035	9.346	0.000

Source: Author’s own work based on SmartPLS results

The mediation results as given in Table 13 support all the main hypotheses since all T statistics are greater than 1.96 and P- values are less than 0.050. Evaluation of the main hypotheses is shown in Table 14.

**Table 5. Summary of the Main Hypotheses Test results**

Hypotheses		Results
H1	Social equity positively influences consumer intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H2	Public awareness of consumers positively influences their intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H3	Participation (engagement) of consumers positively influence their intention for purchasing sustainable garments	<b>Supported</b>
H4	Social cohesion has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention for sustainable garments.	<b>Supported</b>

Source: Author’s own construction

### 3.6. Overall Model Fit Assessment

Table 15 provides the result of the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) model fit index. Basically, SRMR value less than 0.05 shows a good fit. However, value between 0.05 and 0.1 is still acceptable (SCHERMELLEH-ENGEL et al., 2003). Therefore, the estimated model verified.

**Table 6. Model Fit**

Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.071	0.082
d-G	0.630	0.676
d-ULS	1.794	2.381

Source: Author’s own work based on SmartPLS results

### **3.7. Discussion of the Findings**

This study examined how social sustainability influences the consumer purchase intention for buying sustainable garments. The mediating role of three variables, based on theory of planned behaviour (TPM), in the relationship between the independent constructs (equity, public awareness, participation (engagement), and social cohesion) and the dependent construct (green purchase intention) was also investigated. The developed model was evaluated based on the responses collected from Hungarian students. The model and measurement tool were both validated based on the different methods and analyses. At the end, hypotheses, including sub and main ones were tested accordingly.

Based on the obtained results, the relationship between social cohesion and green purchase intention, mediated by social attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control is the strongest one. Unfortunately, no study has been found which examine explicitly the effect of social cohesion on consumer purchase intention for fashion products. But JAYASHANKAR & RAJU (2020) examined the role of social cohesion in another sector. Based on their study, perception of social cohesion could improve any activities including consumer intention.

Moreover, it is quite discernible that social equity, public awareness, and participation (engagement) have positive effect on green purchase intention. But comparing social cohesion, they have less power.

In contrast to the findings of POP et al., (2020) study, from the obtained results related to the impact of social media on consumer purchase intention, participants did not believe that their decisions are affect significantly by social media contents. Moreover, they were/are not interested to share their experiences and knowledge about social and ethical concerns related to the fashion products on social networks.

An interesting result from this research is related to the relationship between social equity and green purchase intention. In fact, in the current study, this relationship was significant which is contrast with the research performed by JUNG & JIN (2016).

Public awareness of the respondents in connection with social and environmental matters have a positive and significant effect on their purchase intention. This result is supported by another research conducted by SHEN et al. (2013) in the same field.

The study by PILIGRIMIENÉ et al. (2020) shows that the consumer participation (engagement) plays an important role in developing sustainable orientation in any industries or companies.

Moreover, THORISDOTTIR & JOHANNSDOTTIR (2020) provide several studies in fashion industry which emphasise the importance of the consumer participation in order to increase their awareness. Current study result is in line with the finding of WHITE et al. (2019) stating that consumer engagement could motivate them to increase their purchase intention.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Conclusion

Analysing consumer behaviour is an important tool for understanding them and their needs. More importantly, knowing what factors could motivate them and increase their purchase intention has a special role in marketing research. This study has attempted to clarify the purchasing intention of the Hungarian students with regard to social sustainability for fashion products.

As it is discussed, there are four factors, i.e., equity, public awareness, participation (engagement), and social cohesion which should be considered in order to assess social sustainability. Moreover, according to the theory of planned behaviour, intention is affected by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

To find out the effect of social sustainability on consumer purchase intention for fashion products, this study performed by distributing questionnaires among Hungarian students. The questionnaires collected from January 23 until February 23, 2021. Data for this study came from an online survey and as a total of 571 questionnaires were received randomly.

Female participants account for 60% of the sample. Approximately 78% of the participants are pursuing their BSc, 16% studying for a master's, and 6% doing their doctorate university degree. Moreover, based on this study, women are more willing to purchase green garments and in general more often buy garments comparing men.

Among seven factors which may affect purchasing decisions, participants believe price, style and quality have the major impact on their decision making and brand, environmental and social friendly concern, others' opinion, and social media do not play a significant role in their choices.

What is quite surprising, however, is the absolute reluctance of the participants (that belong to the young generation) to share their experience and knowledge about ethical and social issues regarding fashion products on social networks. Furthermore, they do not pay enough attention to that information which is available on social media.

In fact, several analyses were conducted to examine the sample, but PLS SEM was used to support or reject the hypotheses. In other words, to test the significance of the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous latent variables, PLS-SEM was conducted since it is more suitable for checking the theoretical framework.

It has been established in this study that participants are getting more motivated to purchase those fashion products which their manufacturers are following different social and ethical regulations and instructions.

Moreover, among social sustainability factors, social cohesion has the strongest impact on consumer purchase intention, following by equity, public awareness, and participation (engagement). Interestingly, social cohesion is the only factors which has a positive impact on all the theory of planned behaviour's elements (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control).

#### **4.2. Recommendations and Managerial Implications**

According to the empirical evidence of this study, certain recommendations and managerial implications are given to the fashion producers, policy makers, and researchers:

1- Ethical and social labelling could be a good practice for fashion procedures to inform their target customers about their production programs and how they follow different standards and regulations.

2- Women seem to be more interested in green fashion products comparing men. Therefore, while some customised programs are needed to be intimated to address men to pay more attention to the green garments, fashion producers should focus more on women.

3- Although all social sustainability factors sound appealing to the consumers, "social cohesion" has the strongest effect on consumer purchase intention. For this reason, by strengthening of solidarity among people in society, policy makers can implement social sustainability easier in comparison with the other three factors.

4- Accordance with the result, social media has the least effect on consumer decision making process. In that event, fashion producers and policy makers should initiate specific programs in order to increase the positive impact of them on decision making process since social media is one of the main platforms that young generations (specifically students) use every day.

#### **4.3. Research Limitations**

Researchers are always faced with limitations in their research, some of which show themselves even at the beginning. Basically, some unclear concepts lead to generating problems in methodologies as there could be a difference between the understanding of researchers and study

participants. As an instance, the absence of understanding about a customer's opinion regarding the ethical and social sustainability has been observed.

Moreover, a questionnaire was used in this study. As a result, some people may refuse to provide real or correct answers because of different reasons such as lack of time.

In addition, the outbreak of the SARS-Cov-19 disrupted the study as well. For instance, personal meeting with participants was not possible since this method could increase the number of the respondents and consequently lead to the better evaluation of the model or clarify those parts which were not clear for them.

The last but not the least, despite much effort, it was failed to find a study that directly addressed the same issue.

## 5. NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

New scientific results either challenge old scientific results and provide new approaches or support the former findings in different aspects. These results could help to develop new strategies for companies in order to motivate people to purchase sustainable garments along with paying more attention to the social & ethical issues in fashion industry. In connection with the results of this study which had been presented, the novel scientific outcomes drawn from this research are as follows.

1. Designed model developed by author, supported by collected primary data, based on the PLS-SEM method shows that the perception of social sustainability (equity, public awareness, participation (engagement), and social cohesion) increases consumer intention to purchase sustainable garments.
2. One of the novel results brought forth by this study is the higher tendency of women to purchase green garments comparing men. Consequently, marketers and policy makers should assess different behaviours of people according to their gender by performing
3. Based on the obtained results, among the three factors in the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), subjective norms ( $\beta = 0.350$ ,  $T = 8.056$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) have the strongest effect, while the attitude ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $T = 4.841$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) the least in regards of green purchase intention for Hungarian students.
4. Another distinctive result observed from the study is that among seven factors which could affect garment purchasing decision, only price, style, and quality play important roles and the others (brand, environmental and social friendly concern, others' opinion, and social media impact) could not affect buyers' decision significantly.
5. An additional unique result of this study is the indirect effect of social cohesion on green purchase intention via subjective norms. This path shows the strongest effect on consumer intention ( $\beta = 0.324$ ,  $T = 9.346$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).
6. A further finding shows the low popularity of social networks for experience sharing, especially about fashion trends and clothing among the sample of this study. About 86% of the respondents never shared their experience on any social media platforms.

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## 7. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF DISSERTATION

### Journal Publications

**VAF AEI, S. A., AZMOON, I. & FEKETE-FARKAS, M.** (2019): The Impact of Perceived Sustainable Marketing Policies on Green Customer Satisfaction. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 19 (1). pp. 475-491. DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2019.19.1.36

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**GÖRGÉNYI HEGYES, E., MÁTÉ, B., VAF AEI, S. A. & FEKETE-FARKAS, M.** (2017): The Role of Social Media in Gastronomy Industry. *APSTRACT - Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce*, 12. pp. 95-104. DOI: 10.19041/APSTRACT/2017/3-4/14

### Book Chapter

**VAF AEI, S. A. & FEKETE-FARKAS, M.** (2017): Short communication: The effect of social media on customer behaviour and firms' activities. *Management and Organization: Concepts, Tools and Applications*. Pearson. pp. 221-228

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**Web of Science**

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