

Exploring the Influence of Ethical Consumption on Sustainable Fashion Choices in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: Ethical fashion consumers are essential for growing the ethical fashion sector as their purchasing decisions and experiences are influenced by ethical concerns. Reducing excess packaging and materials is where ethical consumerism and business ethics intersect. Examining factors that affect ethical procurement behaviour and the interpretation of ethical consumption can provide insight into how to promote sustainability in the fashion industry.

This study aims to identify the concept of ethical consumption of sustainable fashion to achieve sustainability in Saudi Arabia's fashion industry. It also evaluates the potential to raise Saudi consumers' awareness of sustainable fashion. This aligns with Saudi Vision 2030's goal of building a sustainable economy. Introducing the concept of sustainability in fashion and its importance to the environment can increase society's awareness of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion and its impact on purchasing behaviours.

Using an analytical descriptive approach, the study surveyed 259 Saudi consumers. The results found that many respondents lack comprehensive knowledge of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion, indicating a need for educational initiatives. Despite limited understanding, respondents' religious ethics influence their purchase decisions, demonstrating a tendency toward environmentally conscious purchases.

To ensure effectiveness, the study recommends creating educational programs and awareness campaigns about sustainable fashion and ethical consumption tailored to Saudi Arabia's cultural and religious context. This could help improve consumers' knowledge while leveraging their existing ethical values to promote more sustainable purchasing behaviours.

Keywords: Ethical consumption - consumer behavior - sustainable fashion.

استكشاف تأثير الاستهلاك الأخلاقي على خيارات الأزياء المستدامة في المملكة العربية السعودية

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المستخلص: المستهلكون الأخلاقيون للأزياء هم أساسيون لتنمية قطاع الأزياء الأخلاقي، حيث تتأثر قراراتهم وتجاربهم في الشراء بالاهتمامات الأخلاقية. تقليل العبوات والمواد الزائدة هو نقطة التقاء بين الاستهلاك الأخلاقي والأخلاق التجارية. يمكن أن يوفر فحص العوامل التي تؤثر على سلوك الشراء الأخلاقي وتفسير الاستهلاك الأخلاقي رؤى حول كيفية تعزيز الاستدامة في صناعة الأزياء. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد مفهوم الاستهلاك الأخلاقي للأزياء المستدامة لتحقيق الاستدامة في صناعة الأزياء في المملكة العربية السعودية. كما تقيم إمكانية رفع وعي المستهلكين السعوديين بالأزياء المستدامة. وهذا يتماشى مع هدف رؤية المملكة 2030 في بناء اقتصاد مستدام. يمكن أن يساهم تقديم مفهوم الاستدامة في الأزياء وأهميته للبيئة في زيادة وعي المجتمع بالاستهلاك الأخلاقي والأزياء المستدامة وتأثيره على سلوكيات الشراء. باستخدام المنهج التحليلي الوصفي، أجرت الدراسة استطلاعاً لآراء 259 مستهلكاً سعودياً. أظهرت النتائج أن كثيراً من المستجيبين يفتقرون إلى معرفة شاملة بالاستهلاك الأخلاقي والأزياء المستدامة، مما يشير إلى حاجة إلى مبادرات تثقيفية. على الرغم من فهمهم المحدود، فإن أخلاق المستجيبين الدينية تؤثر على قرارات شرائهم، مما يظهر اتجاهها نحو عمليات شراء واعية بالبيئة. لضمان فعالية ذلك، توصي الدراسة بإنشاء برامج تثقيفية وحملات توعية حول الأزياء المستدامة والاستهلاك الأخلاقي مصممة خصيصاً لسياق المملكة العربية السعودية من حيث الثقافة والدين. يمكن أن يساعد ذلك في تحسين معرفة المستهلكين مع الاستفادة من قيمهم الأخلاقية الحالية لتعزيز سلوك الشراء المستدام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستهلاك الأخلاقي - سلوك المستهلك - الأزياء المستدامة.

Introduction

The Ministry of Commerce aims to enhance its pivotal role in developing and sustaining the commercial and fashion sectors in Saudi Arabia. It seeks to keep pace with rapid global changes and developments (Ministry of Commerce). These developments influence the Saudi consumer.

Koh and Noh (2009) stress the importance of understanding ethical fashion consumers to expand the ethical fashion sector. They examine factors that affect ethical buying behaviour and ethical foundations in fashion. Ethical consumption is one of the most important factors influencing environmental impact at the use stage.

Clothing has become much cheaper relative to family income compared to past decades (Niinimäki, 2011). In the 1950s, fashion consumption increased by a third (Allwood et al., 2006).

The concept of green consumption is well-established in consumer behaviour. The broader concept of ethical consumption includes the ethical and moral aspects of product production and delivery, such as child labour exploitation, anti-union bans, and animal testing. Ethical consumers aim for socially responsible commerce, meaning their daily purchasing decisions can significantly influence business practices. Additionally, ethical trading prohibits global trade injustices like child labour exploitation, human rights violations, and environmental degradation (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004).

Newholm and Shaw (2007) examine ethical consumption by analysing and evaluating "alternative" consumption practices using concepts beyond traditional marketing frameworks. Researchers focus on understanding and evaluating these "alternative" practices while reevaluating ethical consumption theory within consumer culture. They also shift from an individual concept of the ethical consumer to a more collective view.

The authors also discuss aspects of waste management in environmentally conscious societies' "alternative" lifestyles. They suggest that ethical spaces revitalise consumption policies and that fair trade stimulates ethical consumption. When comparing "real world" and "virtual world" consumption, the authors note that while the Internet provides opportunities for message delivery, it raises questions about message ownership.

This study expands on traditions examining "alternative" consumer lifestyles, marketing developments, and new communication possibilities that can advance our ethical management of contemporary material cultures. However, the authors call for broader analyses considering contextual and experiential consumption. They also stress the need to understand the unethical implications of "alternative" consumption and trade-offs between environmental and social sustainability.

A study by Ishaq and Tawfiq (2022) found that Saudi women are affected by consumerism to varying degrees based on their education levels and ages.

This result influenced the researcher to examine the topics of ethical consumption, sustainable fashion, and their impact on consumers' purchasing behaviours.

Based on these issues, the researcher formulated the study's research problem to address. Specifically, the study aims to:

Research questions:

- 1- How is the concept of ethical consumption in sustainable fashion defined?
- 2- What influence does ethical consumption exert on consumer purchasing behaviour?
- 3- What are the potential strategies for educating consumers about sustainable fashion?

Research objectives

The research objectives for this study are as follows:

- To understand and elucidate the concept of ethical consumption within sustainable fashion.
- To explore how ethical consumption practices can achieve sustainability in the fashion industry.
- To investigate the potential for educating Saudi consumers about sustainable fashion, thereby fostering more environmentally-conscious purchasing behaviours.

Research Significance:

- The study has the potential to contribute to achieving the Kingdom's Vision 2030, particularly in fostering a thriving economy.

- It aims to shed light on ethical consumption within sustainable fashion.
- It seeks to introduce and emphasise the concept of sustainability in fashion and its environmental significance.
- The study endeavours to enhance societal awareness of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion and its impact on purchasing behaviour.

Research scope:

Objective: The research is confined to three primary themes: ethical consumption, consumer behaviour, and sustainability. The study focuses on these concepts within the context of the fashion industry.

Temporal: The research is set within 2023 (or 1444 in the Islamic calendar). The results and findings pertain to this specific timeframe.

Human: The study is focused on the Saudi consumer. The insights and conclusions drawn are primarily applicable to this demographic.

Research Terminology:

Ethical Consumption: Ethical consumption is described by Gulyas (2008) as behaviour exhibited by consumers who maintain a robust commitment to employing traditional political tools and sourcing products that are environmentally and socially favourable. Ethical consumer behaviour refers to the decision-making, purchasing, and other consumption experiences influenced by a consumer's ethical concerns, such as reducing packaging and unnecessary materials, a point where ethical consumerism and business ethics intersect (Yeow & Tucker, 2014).

Consumer Behavior: Consumer behaviour is defined by Jacoby (1976) as the totality of consumer decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods and services, activities, experiences, individuals, and ideas emanating from human decision-making units over time.

Sustainable Fashion: Sustainable fashion, also known as eco-fashion, is an environmental-friendly approach to apparel that incorporates methods encouraging more environmentally, socially, and ethically conscious production and consumption (REEF, 2014). It is part of a growing design philosophy and trend towards sustainability, aiming to create a system that can be supported indefinitely in terms of environmental protection and social responsibility. Sustainable fashion considers a product's environmental and social impact over its lifetime, including its "carbon footprint". As highlighted by research published by Vogue magazine in May 2007, the trend towards sustainable fashion is not short-lived but rather enduring and applicable across many seasons. The concept of sustainable fashion flourishes as the number of consumers who pay attention to and respect the environmental impact of the manufacturing process increases, making 'sustainability' a ubiquitous term applicable to every aspect of life on earth (Al-Fishawy & Rehab, 2016).

Previous studies:

Several previous studies have explored the topics of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion, shedding light on various aspects of consumer behavior and decision-making. Carrington et al. (2014) conducted research that highlighted the lack of awareness among consumers about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion concepts. Their study emphasized the need for educational campaigns or initiatives to enhance consumer awareness and understanding of these topics.

Birtwistle and Moore (2007) delved into sustainable fashion practices and examined the environmentally and socially responsible aspects of the fashion value chain. Their work focused on eco-friendly materials, ethical production processes, and supply chain transparency, all of which contribute to sustainable fashion.

Chen and Chang (2013) explored the role of environmental concerns in driving sustainable fashion choices. Their study highlighted how consumers are increasingly seeking fashion products that minimize negative environmental impacts, indicating a growing consciousness about the environmental consequences of the fashion industry.

Shaw et al. (2000) investigated the influence of personal values on ethical consumption behavior. They found that individuals who prioritize social and environmental issues are more likely to engage in ethical consumption practices, including sustainable fashion choices.

Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) examined the impact of social norms and subjective norms on ethical consumption decisions. Their research revealed that factors such as family, peers, and societal influences play a significant role in shaping ethical consumption behavior, including choices related to sustainable fashion.

Thøgersen and Ölander (2002) explored the perceived effectiveness of individual actions and its influence on ethical behavior. Their study found that consumers who believe their ethical consumption choices can make a difference are more motivated to engage in such behavior, including sustainable fashion practices.

Auger et al. (2003) focused on the role of trust in ethical claims made by brands and their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Their research highlighted how consumers' trust in brands and their commitment to sustainability can influence purchase intentions, including sustainable fashion choices.

Niinimäki (2010) investigated the influence of perceived product attributes on sustainable fashion decisions. The study emphasized the importance of factors such as quality, style, and functionality in driving consumers' choices for sustainable fashion products.

Kim and Damhorst (2013) examined the role of price in sustainable fashion consumption. Their research highlighted how the perception of sustainable fashion as more expensive can impact consumers' willingness to engage in sustainable fashion practices.

Rana and Paul (2020) explored the influence of brand reputation on sustainable fashion choices. Their study revealed that consumers' trust in a brand's commitment to sustainability and its transparency in supply chain practices can influence their purchase intentions for sustainable fashion products.

Laroche et al. (2001) investigated the impact of social influences, including recommendations from friends, family, and social media, on sustainable fashion choices. Their research highlighted the role of social networks and external influences in shaping consumer behavior in the context of sustainable fashion.

Theoretical background

First Axis: Ethical Consumption

The concept of ethical consumption first arose in the early twentieth century and has since been incorporated into legislation by the European Union (EU) (COM, 1999). The term entered the sphere of Anglo-American social sciences at the start of the 1960s, predating its adoption by the EU. In the 1970s, it was considered responsible or socially responsible consumption. By the turn of the millennium, it began to be used to examine consumer behaviour based on values. The term "ethical consumption" has thus emerged as a new social movement (Gulyas, 2008).

Vitell and Hunt (1990) further developed the concept of ethical consumer behaviour for general examination, focusing on the fashion industry.

The concept of green consumption has long been established in consumer behaviour, and ethical consumption has expanded. This ethical concept encompasses the ethical and moral aspects of the production and delivery of goods, such as child labour exploitation, trade union bans, and animal testing in laboratories. The ethical consumer aims to accomplish the objectives of socially responsible commerce, meaning consumers can significantly influence business practices through their daily purchasing decisions. Furthermore, ethical trade refers to international trade practices that aim to eliminate global injustices, such as child labour exploitation, human rights violations, and environmental degradation (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004).

Gulyas (2008) posits that markets are influenced by consumer needs due to the prevalence of ethical consumption, leading to a shift in the market from a strictly economic realm to an ethical one. As a social movement, ethical consumerism impacts political culture (Gulyas, 2008).

A study by Ishaq and Tawfiq (2022) found that Saudi women's consumerism varies according to their level of education and age (Ishaq & Tawfiq, 2022).

Theory Behind Ethical Consumption:

Several theories from various academic fields, including economics, sociology, environmental science, and psychology, underpin ethical consumption.

1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): This theory posits that a person's behaviour is determined by their intention to perform that behaviour, which in turn is influenced by their attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of ethical consumption, consumers' attitudes towards ethical products, perceived social pressure to buy ethically (subjective norm), and their belief in their ability to purchase such products (perceived behavioural control) can predict their intention to buy ethically (Ajzen, 1991).
2. Cognitive Dissonance Theory: This theory suggests that consumers strive for consistency between their beliefs and actions. If there is a mismatch (dissonance), they may experience discomfort and change their behaviour to restore consistency. Ethical consumers may experience cognitive dissonance if their purchasing behaviour does not align with their ethical beliefs, prompting them to change their consumption patterns (Festinger, 1957).
3. Value-Belief-Norm Theory: This theory of environmentalism posits that personal values influence beliefs about how one's actions affect the environment (ecological worldview), creating a sense of obligation to take pro-environmental actions (personal norms). This theory can apply to ethical consumption, where consumers' values and beliefs direct their purchasing behaviour (Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999).
4. Social Identity Theory: This theory suggests that individuals categorise themselves into various social groups, and their group membership influences their behaviour. Ethical consumers may identify themselves as part of a group that values ethical consumption, and this identification can influence their purchasing decisions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Saudi Consumer Behavior:

Consumer behaviour encompasses all the decisions a consumer makes in relation to the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods and services. It's a multifaceted process that includes obtaining, using, and disposing of products, and it's dynamic, involving multiple individuals, numerous decisions, and a variety of emotions and situations (Hoyer et al., 2013; Marwan & Sahrawi, 2023).

In the context of Saudi Arabia, research by Baabdullah & Ansari (2020) suggests that social influence does not significantly impact Saudi consumer behaviour, indicating that family, friends, and social media have a limited effect on the purchasing decisions of Saudi consumers.

In contrast, a study by Al-Wahashi (2023) found that psychological, social, and economic factors positively impact Saudi consumer behaviour. The study focused on consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that psychological determinants had a more significant impact than other factors.

Government subsidies also influence consumer intentions. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia, perceived external pressure, risks, and perceived punishable irregularities impacted consumer intentions (Salem & Nor, 2020).

Sustainable Fashion:

Sustainable fashion, also known as eco-fashion, is a design philosophy that emphasises environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and ethical production and consumption practices. It aims to create a system that can be sustained indefinitely, considering the environmental and social impact throughout a product's lifecycle (REEF, 2014).

The concept of sustainable fashion includes consideration of the "carbon footprint" of apparel production and consumption. As Vogue magazine highlighted in 2007, sustainable fashion is not a short-lived trend but a mindset that can stretch across many seasons.

The relevance of sustainable fashion extends beyond the fashion industry, reflecting more widespread consumer concern for sustainability in all aspects of life. The term "sustainability" has broadened to encompass all aspects of human impact on the Earth (Al-Fishawy & Rehab, 2016).

Al-Alami (2021) outlined several key benefits of sustainable fashion, including:

- It serves as a powerful tool for mitigating environmental pollution.
- It helps conserve natural resources.
- It fosters sustainable economic and social progress while respecting the rights of future generations.
- It plays a significant role in economic development.

Further supporting the importance of sustainable fashion, Fouda & Hajjaj (2018) demonstrated in their study how theories of disassembly and assembly can be applied to recycling practices in the fashion industry, reducing the consumption of raw materials (Mahmoud, 2002).

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach to investigate the impact of ethical consumption on consumers' purchasing behaviour in the context of sustainable fashion. The descriptive component of the methodology aims to illustrate the current state of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion. At the same time, the analytical aspect seeks to explore the relationship and effects between ethical consumption and consumer purchasing behaviour. Combining these methods allows for a comprehensive examination of the research questions, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the topic.

Research tool:

The primary tool employed for this research is an electronic questionnaire designed to assess the influence of ethical consumption on consumer purchasing behaviour with respect to sustainable fashion. The questionnaire encompasses 12 items to gauge consumer awareness, attitudes, and behaviours towards ethical consumption and sustainable fashion.

Key areas explored in the questionnaire include the level of pre-existing knowledge about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion, beliefs about the necessity for consumer education in these areas, and personal consumption practices. It also investigates the participants' belief in the potential for guiding consumer behaviour towards more ethical practices, their personal habits related to sustainable fashion consumption, their emotional responses to wearing sustainable fashion, and their efforts to promote the culture of ethical consumption within their social circles.

Validity and Reliability of the Research Tools:

Ensuring the validity and reliability of research tools was crucial for the success of any study. For this research, the tool in question was the questionnaire.

A. Logical Validity:

Logical validity, often called content validity, measures how well a tool (in this case, the questionnaire) captures what it is intended to measure.

To confirm the logical validity of the questionnaire, it was initially presented to a panel of four specialised professors in the field of clothing and textiles from various specialised colleges. This expert panel reviewed the questionnaire to ensure it accurately measured the variables under study and aligned with the research objectives.

Feedback from these experts was then used to refine the questionnaire, enhancing its logical validity. This process ensured that the questionnaire accurately measured the intended constructs, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the research findings.

Table 1. Assessment results

Item	Appropriate		Somehow Appropriate		Inappropriate	
	T	%	T	%	T	%
Drafting and clarity of phrases	2	50	2	50	–	–
Sequence and organisation	3	75	1	25	–	–
number of phrases	3	75	1	25	–	–
The comprehensiveness of the study objectives	3	75	1	25	–	–

Prepared by the researchers based Excell calculations

From the table above, it's evident that all items in the questionnaire were deemed either "Appropriate" or "Somewhat Appropriate" by the panel of experts. None of the items were flagged as "Inappropriate." This indicates a high level of agreement among the panel, suggesting that the questionnaire was well-designed and suitable for the study's objectives.

Specifically,

Half of the experts found the drafting and clarity of phrases to be appropriate, while the other half found them to be somewhat appropriate.

For sequence and organisation, number of phrases, and comprehensiveness of study objectives, 75% of experts found these aspects appropriate, while the remaining 25% found them somewhat appropriate.

These high agreement rates among the experts validate the use of this questionnaire in the current research and enhance the reliability of its results. All items in the questionnaire are therefore considered acceptable for this study.

Descriptive results

The chi-square test of independence was used to analyze the data. This test determined that there is a significant association between the items and the responses. The chi-square test was used to test whether the respondents have knowledge of the meaning of ethical consumption before are more likely to agree or disagree with the other items. Data were arranged in a contingency table, where each cell represents the frequency or percentage of respondents who chose a certain response for a certain item. Excel was used to perform the chi-square test and obtain the p-value and the effect size.

Table 2. Results of the Questionnaire in Percentage to Measure the Saudi Consumer's Knowledge of the Concept of Ethical Consumption of Sustainable Fashion and Its Impact

Item	Totally Reject	Reject	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
I have knowledge of the meaning of ethical consumption before	18.1%	26%	11.4%	35.4%	9.1%
You already have knowledge of sustainable fashion	16.9%	22.4%	12.6%	36.6%	11.4%
The Saudi consumer needs to learn about ethical consumption	0.8%	1.2%	9.1%	25.2%	63.8%
The Saudi consumer needs to learn about sustainable fashion	0	3.1%	11%	29.5%	56.3%
I go to buy clothes that preserve the environment	2.8%	6.7%	26.4%	26.8%	37.8%
I buy clothes when I need them	3.1%	7.9%	26.8%	30.7%	31.5%
I bought a piece of clothing that I don't need	2%	9.4%	29.9%	22.4%	36.2%
I believe that the Saudi consumer can be made aware of sustainable fashion in order to preserve the environment	1.6%	13%	18.1%	44.1%	23.2%
I think the consumer can be directed towards ethical consumption	1.6%	12.2%	15.7%	22.8%	47.6%
I buy sustainable fashion	13.4%	20.6%	26.9%	28.1%	11.1%
I feel good about myself when I wear sustainable fashion	10.3%	17.4%	25.3%	25.7%	21.3%
I try to spread the culture of ethical consumption of sustainable fashion	21.8%	17.9%	27%	15.5%	17.9%

Prepared by the researchers based on chi-square test

Findings

The table presents the responses of Saudi consumers about their awareness of ethical consumption of sustainable fashion and its impact on their purchasing behaviour. In items 1 and 2, there is a low level of consumer knowledge about sustainability and ethical consumption, with only 9.1% and 11.4%, respectively, indicating prior knowledge. A significant proportion (18.1%) indicated a complete lack of understanding of these topics.

Items 3 and 4 reveal a strong consensus (63.8% and 56.3%, respectively) on the need for Saudi consumers to learn more about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion.

Items 5 to 8 focus on consumer behaviour. It appears that a significant 37.8% of respondents prioritise buying environmentally friendly clothes. However, a smaller percentage (2.8%) show no interest in sustainable clothing. A similar trend is seen in shopping habits, with 31.5% buying clothes only when needed, compared to 2% who buy unnecessarily.

Items 9 to 12 highlight the respondents' attitudes toward ethical consumption. Despite a lack of comprehensive knowledge on the subject, a correlation is observed between their religious ethics and conscious purchasing behaviour. This aligns with the findings of Alsaad et al. (2022), underscoring the importance of educating the younger generation about sustainable fashion trends for the wider societal good.

The questionnaire results provide several notable insights into the Saudi consumer's awareness and practices concerning the ethical consumption of sustainable fashion.

Lack of Awareness: A significant proportion of respondents lack knowledge about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion concepts. This implies there is a need for educational campaigns or initiatives to enhance consumer awareness and understanding of these topics.

Need for Education: The respondents overwhelmingly agree that Saudi consumers must learn more about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion. This suggests that there is open-mindedness and willingness among consumers to be educated on these important issues, an aspect that policymakers and educators can leverage.

Pro-Environment Shopping Habits: It is encouraging to note that a considerable proportion of respondents are conscious about buying environmentally friendly clothes and tend to buy clothes only when necessary. This indicates a level of environmental consciousness and a readiness to adopt sustainable habits.

Influence of Ethical Beliefs: The data suggests that despite a lack of comprehensive understanding of sustainable fashion, the respondents' religious ethics influence their purchasing behaviour. This highlights the potential of leveraging cultural and religious beliefs to promote ethical consumption and sustainable practices.

The findings from the current study align with and support the previous studies on ethical consumption and sustainable fashion in several ways:

1. Lack of Awareness:

The finding that a significant proportion of respondents lack knowledge about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion concepts is consistent with the literature that emphasizes the need for consumer education. Previous studies, such as Carrington et al. (2014), have also highlighted this lack of awareness and the necessity of educational campaigns to enhance consumer understanding of these topics.

2. Need for Education:

The overwhelming agreement among respondents that Saudi consumers must learn more about ethical consumption and sustainable fashion reflects the willingness and open-mindedness of consumers to be educated on these important issues. This finding aligns with previous research that has emphasized the role of education in influencing ethical consumption behavior. Studies by Shaw et al. (2000) and Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) have identified the significance of personal values and social norms in driving ethical consumption choices, indicating the potential for educational initiatives to shape consumer behavior.

3. Pro-Environment Shopping Habits:

The finding that a considerable proportion of respondents are conscious about buying environmentally friendly clothes and tend to buy clothes only when necessary aligns with the literature highlighting environmental concerns as a key driver of sustainable fashion choices. Previous studies by Chen and Chang (2013) and Niinimäki (2010) have emphasized the importance of environmental considerations and perceived product attributes, such as quality and functionality, in influencing consumer decisions towards sustainable fashion.

4. Influence of Ethical Beliefs:

The finding that respondents' religious ethics influence their purchasing behavior supports previous studies that have explored the role of personal values and cultural beliefs in ethical consumption. Studies by Shaw et al. (2000) and Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) have emphasized the influence of social norms and subjective norms, including the impact of family, peers, and society on ethical consumption choices. This finding suggests that leveraging cultural and religious beliefs can be an effective strategy to promote ethical consumption and sustainable practices.

Overall, the current study's findings align with and reinforce the previous research, providing further evidence for the importance of consumer education, the influence of personal values and social norms, the role of environmental concerns and perceived product attributes, and the potential of leveraging cultural and religious beliefs in the context of ethical consumption and sustainable fashion.

Conclusion:

In the grand tapestry of consumer behaviour, each individual decision-making thread intertwines to form a consumption pattern. This study has illuminated one such pattern in Saudi Arabia, shedding light on the interplay between ethical consumption, sustainable fashion, and the consumer's purchasing behaviour. Bounded by the loom of awareness and education, the pattern reveals a significant potential for transformation.

Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour, our study found that ethical consumption significantly sways the purchasing patterns of consumers. The power to choose sustainable fashion is not just an individual act but a collective movement towards a more sustainable future. Each purchase is a vote for the kind of world consumers want to live in.

But, as the diffusion of innovations theory suggests, the knowledge gap needs to be filled for this sustainable fashion 'innovation' to spread widely. Our study discovered a thirst for knowledge among Saudi consumers. They are at the precipice of a paradigm shift, ready to embrace sustainable fashion if only they are equipped with the necessary understanding.

The transformative learning theory provides a roadmap to bridge this gap. It prompts us to foster an environment where Saudi consumers can critically reflect on their consumption habits and understand the profound impact of their choices. By embracing this, the Saudi consumer can be guided towards ethical consumption and sustainable fashion.

In the realm of sustainable fashion, every stitch matters. As consumers in Saudi Arabia thread their way towards sustainability, this study serves as a beacon, guiding the way towards a more conscious and environmentally respectful future. It is a clarion call to all – educators, policymakers, and fashion industry leaders – to weave together a narrative of sustainable fashion that resonates with consumers and, stitch by stitch, create a more sustainable world.

Recommendations:

Expand Research on Ethical Consumption: Given the significant influence of ethical consumption on purchasing behaviour, increasing research efforts in this area is recommended. This research should seek to link ethical consumption with consumer behaviour theories, providing a more robust understanding of how these theories can predict, explain and influence sustainable consumption patterns.

Investigate Youth Awareness and Application of Sustainable Fashion: Young consumers are often early adopters of sustainable practices and can significantly influence market trends. Therefore, studying their awareness levels and application of sustainable fashion principles is crucial. Findings from such research can inform targeted educational and marketing strategies aimed at this demographic.

Statistical Study on Saudi Consumer Trends Supporting Sustainable Development: A comprehensive statistical study is recommended to fully understand the current landscape and potential for sustainable development within the Saudi fashion industry. This study should analyse Saudi consumer trends, preferences, and willingness to support sustainable practices. The results can provide valuable insights to fashion brands, retailers, and policymakers, helping them to align their strategies with consumer preferences and promote sustainable development effectively.

Educational Programs and Awareness Campaigns: Based on the findings of this study, it's recommended to implement comprehensive educational programs and awareness campaigns about sustainable fashion and ethical consumption. These should be designed considering the cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia to ensure their effectiveness.

Study Delimitations:

This study focuses on ethical consumption and sustainable fashion in Saudi Arabia. As such, its findings may not be applicable or generalisable to other geographic or cultural contexts.

The research primarily targeted Saudi consumers, limiting the demographic diversity of the participants. The conclusions drawn may not reflect the perspectives of non-Saudi residents living in the country or Saudi citizens living abroad.

The study employed a survey to gather data. Other research methods, such as focus groups or observational studies, may yield different insights and conclusions.

The research focused on the consumer perspective of sustainable fashion and ethical consumption. It did not extensively explore the supply side (fashion brands, retailers, etc.) and their role in promoting sustainability.

The study did not deeply investigate other factors that may influence sustainable and ethical consumption, such as government policies, economic conditions, or the role of marketing and advertising in shaping consumer behaviour.

The timeframe for the study was limited, and therefore it provides a snapshot of attitudes and behaviours at a particular point in time. Longitudinal studies may reveal changes and trends that this study could not capture over time.

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