

Profiling Fast-Fashion Purchase Intentions Among Gen Z and Millennial Women through AI-Driven Consumer Analytics

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Abstract

The consumer purchasing behaviour among Gen Z and Millennial women has transformed significantly with the presence of affordable and trendy clothing available by the fast fashion businesses through rapid production cycles. This trend among the young buyers and the resulting growth comes with increased environmental concerns like excessive water consumption and pollution. While there is an increasing awareness of sustainability among young buyers, they continue to prioritize fast fashion and trend appeal over environmentally responsible purchasing. In this context, this study aims to examine the influence of fashion preference, fast fashion perception and purchase intention with an awareness on environmental issues among young women consumers. The study further attempts to profile consumers based on their purchase intentions. Primary data collected among Millennial and Gen Z women consumers, reveal that Gen Z consumers dominate the fast fashion market, with most respondents relying on pocket money and spending below Rs.5000 monthly on fashion products. The study also highlights that there is a significant difference in the spending behaviour observed among working women and those dependent on pocket money. The findings also reveal that there exists a weak relationship between environmental awareness and purchase intention initially. However, with an intervention using an environment-awareness video, the multiple regression shows that fast fashion perception being the dominant predictor of purchase intention. The cluster analysis further segmented the consumers based on behavioural and attitudinal aspects providing targeted marketing strategies for the fast fashion business.

Keywords: Fast Fashion, purchase intention, environmental concerns, consumer behaviour, gen Z, millennial

Introduction

The fast fashion industry has revolutionized the purchase behaviour of young consumers in recent years. Fast fashion refers to producing low-cost clothing collections rapidly to reflect current high-cost luxury fashion trends. Popular brands such as H&M and Zara through accelerated production cycles, enable consumers to frequently update their wardrobes at relatively low costs. Fast fashion is characterised by affordable price, rapid production, mass production, quick adaptation to runway trends, and short product life span. Most brands are quick enough to copy runway designs and make them available at affordable prices. This has influenced how young women shop for clothing today, particularly, Gen Z.

Nevertheless, the expansion of the fashion industry brings significant environmental challenges also. This includes (1) its contribution to nearly 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, (2) the creation of approximately 92 million

tonnes of textile waste each year (discarded in landfills or burned), (3) nearly 85% of discarded textiles are not recycled, (4) roughly 2,700 to 3,000 litres of water to produce one cotton t-shirt, and (5) dyeing processes account for about 20% of global industrial water pollution. (Zipdp Education Report, 2026).

At the consumer level, purchase decisions are no longer driven purely by necessity or uniqueness. Instead, factors such as fashion preference and perception of fast fashion, especially in terms of affordability and trendiness, play a dominant role. While environmental awareness is gradually increasing, it does not always translate into responsible consumption behaviour. During recent times, sustainability awareness, particularly through digital and video-based content, has emerged as a key tool to influence consumer attitudes. However, it remains uncertain whether such awareness methods are effective in enhancing environmental awareness and encouraging a shift toward sustainable intention. This study attempts to understand how these factors such as fashion preference, fast fashion perception, environmental awareness interact to shape consumer decision making in the context of fast fashion and profile Gen Z consumers based on their fast fashion purchase intentions.

Need For The Study

While the environmental impact is widely known, there seems to be a trend in purchase intention towards affordability and not sustainability which clearly indicated a disconnect between awareness and intent. Current studies primarily focus on direct relationships between environmental concern and purchase behaviour. However, consumer decision-making is more complex and influenced by multiple factors such as personal fashion preference, perception of fast fashion, and exposure to sustainability-related communication. There are also limited research examining whether sustainability communication, especially in the form of educational videos if they can effectively enhance environmental awareness and influence consumer purchase intentions. Understanding the effectiveness of such interventions is crucial for marketers, educators, and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption. Additionally, much of the research in this area has been conducted in Western countries, with relatively less focus on Indian consumers, particularly young women, who represent a major segment of fast fashion buyers. Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by examining how multiple variables collectively influence consumer behaviour and whether awareness-driven interventions can create a meaningful shift toward sustainability.

Problem Statement

The rapid growth of fast fashion has shifted consumer preferences from uniqueness to affordability and trend-driven consumption. While this has increased accessibility, it has also contributed significantly to environmental degradation, including high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and textile waste.

Despite increasing discussions around sustainability, it remains unclear whether consumers possess sufficient environmental awareness to influence their purchasing decisions. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence to determine whether sustainability communication initiatives can effectively enhance awareness and lead to a shift in consumer intention toward sustainable purchasing practices. Another key issue is the lack of an integrated understanding of how fashion preference, fast fashion perception, environmental awareness, and sustainability communication effectiveness collectively influence purchase intention and sustainable intention.

This problem is particularly relevant in the context of young women consumers, who form a significant portion of the fast fashion market. Hence, the study seeks to examine whether environmental awareness can be enhanced through structured communication and how various consumer-related factors interact to influence both purchase intention and sustainable intention and finally to profile the customers based on their purchase intentions.

Literature Review

Existing literature on fast fashion consumption highlights the gap in understanding between consumer awareness of sustainability and actual purchasing behaviour. Several studies identify affordability, trend orientation, and

social media influence as dominant drivers of fast fashion purchases, particularly among Gen Z consumers. The study by Sahana and Mohamed Aadil (2025), Ramya and Sujith (2025), and Zhang et al. (2021) reveal that although consumers possess an overall awareness regarding environmental consequences, their purchasing decisions are strongly shaped by price sensitivity, style preferences, and impulse buying tendencies. Similarly, conceptual and behavioural analyses by Navomi Bivek (2025) and Capucão et al. (2024) demonstrate that emotional triggers, digital marketing cues, self-expression motives, and social belonging significantly reinforce repeated fast fashion consumption. These findings collectively highlight the persistence of the awareness–behaviour gap, where sustainability consciousness remains secondary to economic and fashion-oriented motivations when they purchase.

Some studies explore the theoretical and psychological determinants influencing sustainable fashion behaviour. Studies that focus on the Theory of Planned Behaviour highlight that environmental awareness and knowledge positively influence attitudes and perceived behavioural control, which subsequently shape sustainable purchase intention. Magwegwe and Shaik (2024), Malik and Lubis (2025), and Cosma (2024), establish these relationships are often moderated by economic considerations such as affordability and perceived monetary benefits. Neha et al. (2024) and Khan et al. (2025) emphasizes that sustainable marketing practices, eWOM, subjective norms, and brand image positively affect environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour. On the other hand, studies that focus on slow fashion and ethical consumption, Domingos et al. (2022) and Yu Suxia et al. (2025), indicate that consumers with stronger ethical values and environmental consciousness exhibit higher brand loyalty and preference for sustainable alternatives. Thus, these studies imply that while sustainability awareness can influence consumer intention, behavioural outcomes remain constrained by practical and financial barriers.

Studies on the environmental consequences of fast fashion and the structural barriers by Niinimäki et al. (2020), Aponte et al. (2024), and Rahman et al. (2023) reveal that there are severe ecological impacts associated with fast fashion, which includes excessive resource consumption, intense pollution, carbon emissions, and textile waste. Schiaroli et al. (2024) and Ray and Nayak (2023) identify high product prices, limited accessibility, lack of transparency, and insufficient integration of sustainability as the key barriers to sustainable fashion adoption. Riesgo et al. (2020), Agrawal (2024), and Abdelmeguid et al. (2025) emphasize that although consumers express positive attitudes toward eco-friendly apparel and circular fashion, there is an unwillingness to pay premium prices which restricts adoption. Soboleva and Sánchez (2025) highlight the importance of social influence, awareness campaigns, and policy interventions in promoting sustainable behavioural transitions. Thus, there need to be systemic changes involving marketing strategies, affordability, transparency, and supportive policy frameworks in addition to consumer awareness.

Objectives

- To examine the influence of fashion preference, fast fashion perception, and environmental awareness on purchase intention.
- To evaluate the impact of sustainability communication on sustainable intention.
- To profile Gen Z and Millennial women consumers based on purchase intentions.

Methodology

This study adopts a Mixed-methods (i.e. both Quantitative and Qualitative analysis) research design to examine consumer behaviour in the context of fast fashion, among two distinct age cohorts: Millennials and Generation Z women with particular focus on environmental awareness and sustainable intention. The study included a sample of 319 responses.

Conceptual Framework

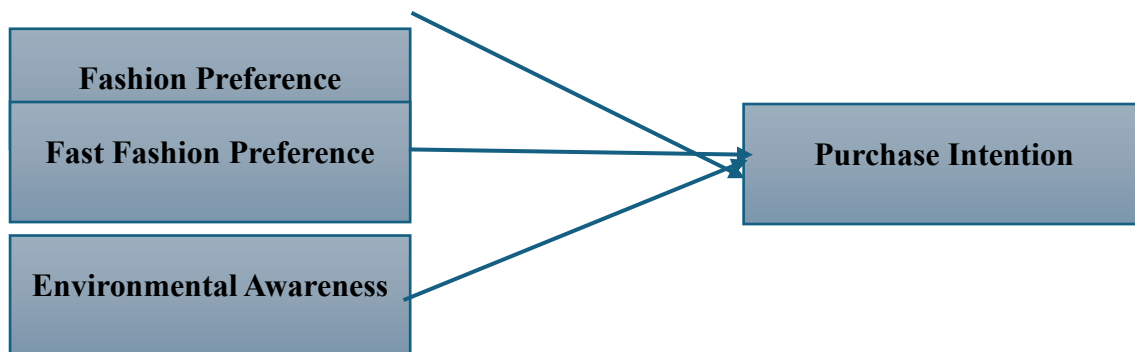


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Data Collection

Data collected mainly from women consumers belonging to the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts were used for this study, as these segments represent a significant portion of fast fashion consumers who are actively involved in fashion-related purchases. The questionnaire was designed to provide practical insights into factors influencing buying patterns and preferences.

Analysis And Findings

The demographic analysis indicates responses from Millennial and Gen Z women. 79.2% of the respondents were in the age group 18-25. Regarding the purchasing behaviour of the respondents, 69.5% respondents purchase fashion products with their pocket money, while about 30.5% respondents used their own income. Among the responses, 73.3% spent below Rs.5000 on Fast Fashion monthly. The demographics indicates that Gen Z cohorts dominate a significant segment of fast fashion buyers.

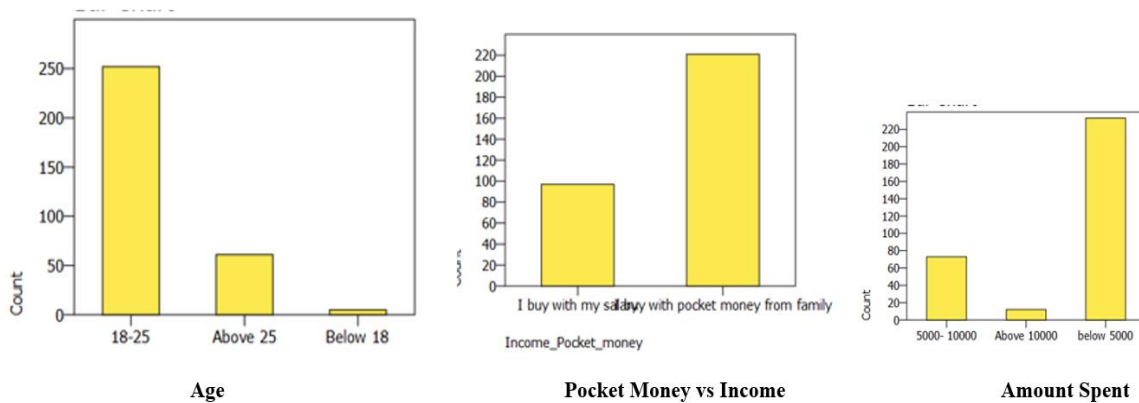


Figure 2. Demographics

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the constructs included in the study. The Cronbach alpha reveal that all constructs have values above the suggested threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency among the scale items.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
Fashion Preference	0.81
Fast Fashion Perception	0.76
Purchase Intention	0.74
Environmental Awareness	0.84

Analysis of Age Differences in Spending Behaviour

ANOVA was performed to understand the difference in age group on the spending behaviour. The findings indicate that there is a difference in the spending behaviour across age groups ($F = 7.68, p = 0.001$). This indicates that age plays a role in influencing fast fashion consumption patterns. Spending patterns differ mainly between younger (18–25) and above 25-year age group.

Table 2: Analysis of Age Differences in Spending Behaviour

ANOVA							
			<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Amount_Spent	Between groups		4.25	2	2.13	7.68	0.001
	Within groups		87.16	315	0.28		
	Total		91.41	317			
Multiple Comparisons (Amount_spent)							
	(I) Family	(J) Family	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey	18-25	Above 25	-.28	.08	.001	-.46	-.10
		Below 18	-.35	.24	.297	-.91	.21
	Above 25	18-25	.28	.08	.001	.10	.46
		Below 18	-.08	.24	.949	-.65	.50
	Below 18	18-25	.35	.24	.297	-.21	.91
		Above 25	.08	.24	.949	-.50	.65
HSD							

Spending Source & Purchase Behaviour

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in the amount spent between respondents who purchase using their salary and those who purchase using pocket money. The result indicates that there is a significant difference observed in spending behaviour of respondents using personal income and those depending on pocket money ($t = 4.96, p < 0.001$). Higher amount spent on purchase is seen among working women than with those who spend with their pocket money indicates the level of disposable income.

Table 3: Spending Source & Purchase Behaviour

Group Statistics						
		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>S.E. Mean</i>	
Amount_Spent	I buy with my salary	97	1.56	0.66	0.07	
	I buy with my pocket money	221	1.19	0.43	0.03	

		Independent Samples Test								
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.(2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>Sig. Error Difference</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>	
									<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
Amount_Spent	Equal variables assumed	64.47	.000	5.82	316	.000	.36	.06	.24	.48
	Equal variables not assumed			4.96	132.94	.000	.36	.07	.22	.51

Key Relationship between Environmental Awareness and Purchase Intention

One of the main objectives of this study was to examine the relationship between environmental awareness and purchase intention. This objective was examined through a two-stage experimental approach.

In the first stage, respondents were assessed with their existing level of environmental awareness on their purchase intention. The correlation analysis showed a weak positive relationship between the variables ($r = 0.188, p < 0.05$). This indicates that environmental awareness had a very limited influence on purchase intention toward fast fashion. In the subsequent stage, respondents were exposed to a short video emphasizing environmental awareness and responsible purchasing behaviour in the context of fast fashion consumption. Following the intervention, the correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between environmental awareness and purchase intention ($r = 0.741, p < 0.05$). This explains that exposure to sustainability-focused awareness content significantly strengthened consumers' purchase intention to adopt more sustainable practices.

Table 4: Correlation between Environmental awareness and purchase intention

Correlations			
		EA_Mean	PI_Mean
EA_Mean	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.188
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.001
	N	318	318
PI_Mean	Pearson Correlation	0.188	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	318	318

Table 5: Correlation between Sustainability Communication And Sustainable Intention

Correlations			
		SCE_Mean	SI_Mean
SCE_Mean	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.741
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.000
	N	318	318
SI_Mean	Pearson Correlation	0.741	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	318	318

Factors Influencing Purchase Intention

The study examines the dominant predictors of purchase intention of Millennial and Gen Z women cohorts on fast fashions using multiple regression analysis with fashion preference, fast fashion perception and environmental awareness as independent variables. The findings indicate that an R² value of 0.47 which implies that approximately 47% of the variation in purchase intention is explained by the combined effect of the three independent variables.

To determine the predictors, fast fashion perception emerge as the dominant predictor of purchase intention with $\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$ thus indicating that consumers’ perceptions and attitudes toward fast fashion strongly influence their intention to purchase such products. The second one is fashion preference, with $\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$ indicating that individuals with stronger fashion preferences are more likely to display higher purchase intention toward fast fashion products. Finally, the regression reveals that environmental awareness is not having a significant impact on purchase intention with $\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.735$ indicating that awareness regarding environmental concerns alone may not directly influence purchasing decisions in the fast fashion context.

Table 6: Factors Influencing Purchase Intention

Model Summary (PI_Mean)					
<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std.Error of the Estimate</i>		
0.68	0.47	0.46	0.55		
ANOVA (PI_Mean)					
	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	81.89	3	27.30	91.07	0.000
Residual	94.12	314	0.30		
Total	176.01	317			
Coefficients (PI_Mean)					
	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficient</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std.Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
(Constant)	0.46	0.22	0.00	2.11	0.035
FP_Mean	0.19	0.04	0.21	5.00	0.000
FFP_Mean	0.65	0.05	0.59	13.22	0.000
EA_Mean	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.34	0.735

Profiling Customers using Cluster Analysis

Profiling of customers was performed using k-means cluster analysis. This was based on their responses on Fashion Preference (FP), Fast Fashion Perception (FFP), Purchase Intention (PI), Environmental Awareness (EA), and Sustainable Intention (SI). The main aim was to identify distinct customer segments with similar attributes and behavioural patterns towards purchase of fast fashion and an awareness of sustainability. Using the mean scores of these variables, the respondents were grouped into four clusters representing different customer profiles. The findings of the different clusters and their traits provide insights for targeted marketing strategies.

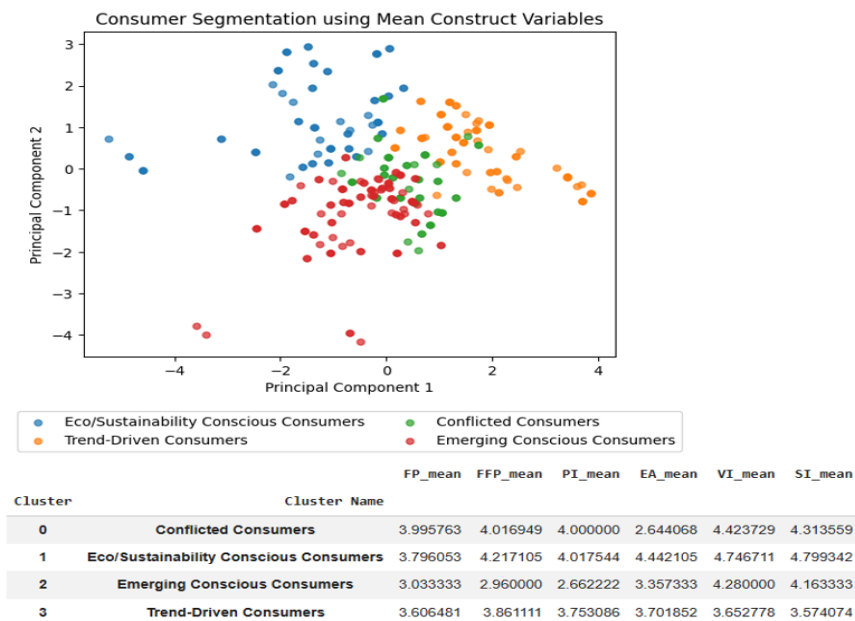


Figure 3. Profiling Gen Z and Millennials

Cluster Analysis

Cluster 0: Conflicted Consumers

The customers in this segment show high inclination towards high fashion preference (FP_mean = 4.00), high fast fashion perception (FFP_mean = 4.02), and high purchase intention (PI_mean = 4.00), and low environmental awareness (EA_mean = 2.64) along with high sustainable intention (SI_mean = 4.31). This indicates that although consumers have strong attraction towards fashion and fast fashion products and interested in sustainable consumption, they have very limited awareness on environmental issues. Therefore, this segment is profiled as Conflicted Consumers.

Cluster 1: Eco/Sustainability Conscious Consumers

The customers in this segment exhibit high fashion preference (FP_mean = 3.79), high fast fashion perception (FFP_mean = 4.21), and high purchase intention (PI_mean = 4.02), combined with very high environmental awareness (EA_mean = 4.44) and sustainable intention (SI_mean = 4.80). This segment of customers seem to be the ideal customers as they have high awareness of environmental concerns and conscious about incorporating them in their purchase decisions. As these customers demonstrate responsible consumption behaviour despite their interest in fashion products, this segment is profiled as Eco/Sustainability Conscious Consumers.

Cluster 2: Emerging Conscious Consumers

The customers in this segment exhibit high sustainable intention (SI_mean = 4.16) and moderate environmental awareness (EA_mean = 3.36) while show low for fashion preference (FP_mean = 3.03), fast fashion perception (FFP_mean = 2.96), and purchase intention (PI_mean = 2.66). As the findings show that these consumers appear

to be gradually developing responsible buying behavior but have lower engagement with fast fashion and with relatively strong sustainable intention, indicates potential for future behavioural transformation. Hence, this segment is profiled as Emerging Conscious Consumers.

Cluster 3: Trend-Driven Consumers

This segment of the customers indicate that they have moderate high inclination towards fashion preference (FP_mean = 3.61), fast fashion perception (FFP_mean = 3.86), and purchase intention (PI_mean = 3.75), moderate attitude towards environmental awareness (EA_mean = 3.70) and relatively lower sustainable intention (SI_mean = 3.57). The purchase decisions of these customers are dominated by fashion trends and product appeal with low awareness of the environmental issues caused by the fast fashion. This segment is profiled as Trend-Driven Consumers.

Thus, these profiling of customers provides valuable insights for fast fashion businesses to design personalized campaigns and communicate to the customers with frequent orientations on the importance of sustainability.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study highlight significant managerial insights for fast fashion businesses focusing on Gen Z and Millennials. Most of the respondents belong to the 18-25 age-group who are highly price-sensitive, the fast fashion brands should examine developing highly affordable and trendy collections while offering premium value-based offerings as these cohorts with high disposable incomes are highly loyal and are good advocates of brands. Hence, the businesses should examine dynamic strategies with discounts, limited period offers and digitally driven promotional campaigns frequently to strengthen customer engagement among these cohorts.

The study also examined the significance of environmental awareness and the sustainability aspects in influencing consumers' purchase intention. As awareness-based video intervention found that the young women are receptive to the awareness on environmental concerns in fast fashion and have responded positively to sustainability aspects. Hence the fast fashion brands should include the environmental and responsible consumption as part of their ongoing promotional activities in the form of short video-clips, influencer collaborations and social media storytelling to effectively communicate environmental concerns. Instead of highlighting sustainability as a separate aspect, it should be integrated with the mainstream fashion as trendy, aspirational and lifestyle based. This approach would be more appealing and make young consumers orient towards eco-friendly fashion purchase.

Finally, the main objective of the study is to profile GenZ and Millennial cohorts on the fast fashion purchase intention. This was done to identify distinct customer segments so that segment-specific marketing strategies to address the changing attitudes and behavioural patterns of consumers. The customer segment that are eco-conscious can be targeted through sustainability-focused branding, ethical sourcing communication, and eco-friendly product lines. The customer segment that needs more orientation on sustainability responds to environment awareness-oriented campaigns and bring positive outcomes. Also, fast fashion brands should also focus on eco-labels, incentives and discounts on sustainable products to reinforce eco-friendly purchase decisions.

Conclusion

The fast fashion purchase intention among Gen Z women is characterized by affordability and individual fashion preferences rather than environmental concerns. While the consumers demonstrate certain level of awareness regarding the environmental impact of fast fashion, an integrated approach by the fast fashion companies in their campaigns and promotional activities would significantly improve the purchase intention. The study highlights that one of the key predictors for purchase is fast fashion perception. Finally, the customer profiling further indicates the presence of distinct customer segments with varying levels of fast fashion preference and environmental awareness thereby focusing on the need for targeted marketing strategies.

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