Factors Affecting Sustainable Clothing Disposal Among the Millennial and Gen Z Consumer Segments

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ABSTRACT

Fashion waste has doubled over 20 years due to fast fashion and consumptive behavior, posing a severe environmental problem. Despite awareness campaigns, the issue persists. This paper focuses on the sustainable clothing disposal behavior of young Indonesian consumers. It identifies factors influencing their clothing disposal, examines cultural and social influences, and suggests strategies for promoting sustainability. An online survey involving 22 Gen Z participants (aged 16-22) in both urban and rural areas in Indonesia was conducted. Most respondents engaged in unsustainable disposal practices, with factors including damage, disuse, trend irrelevance, size mismatch, and unsuitability. Environmental awareness was found to be a significant influence. This study underscores the need for increased awareness and education among young Indonesian consumers to promote sustainable clothing disposal and mitigate the fashion industry's environmental impact.

Introduction

Sustainable Clothing Disposal Behavior Among Young Indonesian Consumers Over the course of 20 years, the amount of fashion waste in a given region can increase twofold due to the prevalence of consumptive behavior and the rise of fast fashion in our modern era (Jacometti 1). Despite efforts to draw attention to this issue, there are still significant obstacles to be overcome as the amount of waste produced by the fashion trends remains unmanageable. Even with numerous campaigns aimed at increasing awareness, the general public still lacks information let alone take action. Further, given the additional challenge of textile waste taking a longer time to decompose, coupled with the constantly shifting fashion trends, tackling the topic of fashion waste becomes more difficult. Therefore, a more comprehensive investigation of the subject matter is required.

Fashion waste poses a significant threat not only in terms of its rapidly increasing statistics but also the environmental footprint left by the industry. Researchers emphasize that in the past 15 years, there has been a doubling of the demand for man-made textiles and a corresponding doubling of global annual consumption of textiles per person from 7 to 13 kg, resulting in a staggering threshold of 100 million tonnes of textile consumption

(Jacometti; (Niinimäki and Durrani 172). Furthermore, Bailey highlights that the vast majority of textiles, more than two thirds, are sent to landfills at the end of their use, with only a mere 15% being recycled, worsening the issue of fashion waste. Beside the concerns coming from consumers, the production of a textile through the industry also leaves a significant footprint to the environment. Aivazidou asserts that every stage of the garment production process has a direct correlation to environmental pollution. This is evident in the amount of water required by the fashion industry for dyeing, bleaching, and washing, with the output of water becoming polluted due to the chemical attributes present in the clothing material, such as polyester. Coupled with the growing demand for clothing over the years, combined with the wasteful production practices, the industry poses a significant threat to the environment.

As of now, the state of fashion waste has reached a concerning level. As indicated by Bailey, the fashion industry comes second only to the oil and gas sector in its contribution to environmental pollution (1). To combat the increase of textile waste, researchers have suggested solutions such as promoting the reuse and recycling of clothing through owner transfer (Shirvanimoghaddam), protest to fast fashion which contributes significantly to waste (Niinimäki et al.), proposing sustainable clothing to fashion brands (Kim), and raising awareness through direct community campaigns and indirectly through social media and advertising media (Jalil). Though these solutions have been implemented, the ultimate outcome still rests in the hands of individual's decisions and perceptions towards fashion.

There have been several studies conducted to comprehend how young consumers behaviorally dispose of their used clothing sustainability. A study conducted by Soyer and Dittrich investigates the attitude-behavior gap for the sustainable choices for purchase, use and disposing of clothes in the Netherlands. The results of their research indicate a gap between attitudes or intentions and actual behavior which is an indication that studies based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, a theory intended to explain all behavior in which people have the ability to exercise self-control, can lead to wrong assumptions on consumer behavior sustainable in practice (11). Consumer purchase behavior toward clothes related to the clothing waste. There are not enough landfills to accommodate the growing amount of garment trash that is produced each year, making governments encourage businesses, industries, and markets to recycle more as a result. Understanding consumer behavior toward eco-fashion clothes made of recycled materials can provide a basis to develop effective guidelines for disposal and purchase recycled clothes (Jalil).

In Indonesia, there have been several studies on youth behavior towards sustainable clothing disposal. Sutikno et al. stated in their research that attitude toward green products had a positive effect with significant results on the purchase intention of young consumers (39). As far as the authors are aware, there is some imbalance in the respondent profile where there are 56 males and 101 females respondents. Further research should be carried out with an equal representation of male and female respondents because this may have an impact on the study's findings. The reason is because there are some other variables like fashion-sensitivity of persons, where fashion-sensitive consumers dispose of garments more rapidly and with less ethical consideration (McNeill). Parung also stated that Indonesian millennials also take design, price, and style into consideration while purchasing clothing(6).

Therefore the aim of this research is to investigate the sustainable clothing disposal behavior among young Indonesian consumers, specifically in identifying the factors that influence young Indonesian consumers' clothing disposal behavior with balanced respondent, examine the role of cultural and social factors in shaping young Indonesian consumers' clothing disposal behavior, and propose some strategies to promote sustainable clothing disposal among young Indonesian consumers.

Method

The aim of the research paper was to explore potential common factors that may have influenced the clothing disposal habits of Indonesian teenagers. To narrow down these factors, we conducted an online survey to determine which factors resulted in unused clothes being thrown away, with the aim of identifying possible actions to prevent excessive textile waste. The study utilized a quantitative research design, with respondents who fell within the age range of 16-22 years, mainly comprising of Gen Z, with a total of 22 participants. These target samples were taken as Gen Z has a higher chance of being exposed to fast fashion, as stated by Farhani.

On March 15, 2023, we conducted the online survey in the form of multiple-choice questions and was divided into two stages to target Indonesian teenagers with different backgrounds. The first stage aimed to gather responses from teenagers living in urban areas in Java, while the second stage targeted teenagers residing in rural areas in Sulawesi. These stages were deemed necessary as external factors such as income level, education, cultural values, environmental factors, and market availability may influence clothing disposal habits among teenagers. This idea was supported by Utami's research, which stated that residents of Java were more likely to purchase fast fashion items due to greater market access and cheaper prices, while those in rural Sulawesi had limited market availability and higher prices, reducing the likelihood of purchasing many items.

Result and Discussion

According to our survey, young Indonesian consumers act in a variety of ways when it comes to disposing of their clothes. The majority of respondents reported disposing of their clothing in unsustainable ways, such as throwing it in the trash or leaving it as is, despite the fact that some of them selected doing things like donating or reselling their clothing. Specifically, 68,2% of respondents reported donating their clothing to charity or secondhand shops, while 4,5% choosed using their clothing used as a mop or rag, 4,5% gave it to their siblings, and another 4,5% chose to dispose of it to a recycling location. Meanwhile, 18,2% of respondents reported throwing their clothing in the trash. The factors that caused the respondents to throw away their used clothes also varied. The reason is because ranging from clothes that were damaged (36.4%), the clothes that were no longer used (54.5%), there also respondents who choose to threw away their clothes because it were no longer in accordance with the trend (9.1%), clothes that don't fit anymore (81.8%), and clothes that are not suitable for use (4.5%).

In terms of factors that influence sustainable clothing disposal behavior, the survey found that environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived behavioral control have a positive effect on sustainable clothing disposal. Environmental awareness was found to be the most significant factor influencing sustainable clothing disposal behavior, as individuals who were more aware of environmental issues were more likely to engage in sustainable clothing disposal behavior. This is also in accordance with previous

research conducted by Razzaq et al. (2018) where they found cultural and religious values play an important role in shaping consumer behavior towards sustainability in fashion. Even though many participants chose to donate their used clothes, 45.5% of them still threw their used clothes into the trash, this highlighting the need for additional education and awareness-raising on environmentally responsible clothing disposal methods. The high inclination for giving apparel to good cause associations among youthful Indonesian buyers is probable because of social and strict qualities that stress providing for those out of luck.

From the survey we conducted with 22 participants, we found out their behavior is significantly influenced by their environmental concern, knowledge about sustainable clothing disposal, and their perceived behavioral control. The result also shows that young Indonesian consumers have a positive attitude towards sustainable clothing disposal. They believe it is important to protect the environment and reduce waste sustainable clothing disposal . However, the result also revealed that there are certain barriers from the young Indonesian consumers that hinder the sustainable clothing disposal behavior. These barriers include fears of misuse of donated clothing, lack of access to proper disposal facilities and costs associated with continued disposal of clothing. Where these results show that previous research studies are still relevant regarding the behavior of sustainable clothing disposal where there are still many young Indonesian consumers who lack knowledge and awareness about sustainable clothing disposal practices and lack of access to recycling facilities are obstacles to sustainable clothing disposal behavior

Conclusion

This research sheds light on the sustainable clothing disposal behavior among young Indonesian consumers. The result shows there is a growing awareness among young consumers in Indonesia about the importance of sustainable clothing disposal, and many still lack the knowledge and resources to practice it effectively. This research confirms the importance of the behaviors among young Indonesian consumers to address sustainable clothing disposal, besides reducing the environmental impact of the fashion industry it also promotes a more sustainable and responsible consumer culture. Based on the results, most young Indonesian consumers are aware of the importance of sustainable clothing disposal behavior, but do not know how to distribute it other than within the family circle. Even though young Indonesian consumers understand the concept, concrete action is still needed to make changes for the better.

In conclusion, this research emphasize the importance of behaviors among young Indonesian consumers while addressing sustainable clothing disposal, not just to reduce the impact of the fashion industry on the environment but also to promote a more sustainable and responsible consumer culture. Starting with understanding the factors that influence sustainable clothing disposing behavior and implementing targeted interventions, it is hoped that we can move towards a more sustainable and equitable treatment of used clothing that benefits people and the planet.

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