

Factors Influencing Sabahan Youths' Intention to Purchase International Fast Fashion Products

**Natania Alicia Kok¹, Alvina Lee¹, Joyce Anne Janiun¹, Fanny Joyce Billy Jeffery¹,
Lee Ying Qi¹, Renny Anak Engkayau¹, Chu Kam Yung¹, Ahmad Juliana^{2*}**

¹Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

²Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Borneo Tarakan, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author: ahmadjuliana@borneo.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing Sabahan youths' intention to purchase international fast fashion products. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study investigates the effects of brand sustainability, social factors, and product accessibility on purchase intention. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed and data were collected from 78 youths in Sabah using an online questionnaire. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that social factors and product accessibility significantly and positively influence purchase intention, whereas brand sustainability does not significantly influence purchase intention. The findings provide important implications for international fashion retailers seeking to strengthen their presence in East Malaysia and contribute to the literature on youth consumer behaviour in emerging markets.

Keywords: Fast fashion, Purchase intention, Brand sustainability, Social factors, Product accessibility.

1. Introduction

The fast fashion industry has experienced substantial growth over the last decade due to globalisation, digitalisation, and changing consumer lifestyles (Fletcher, 2012; Chen, 2021; Joy et al., 2012). International brands such as Zara, H&M, Uniqlo and Cotton On have become increasingly popular among young consumers because they provide fashionable products at affordable prices and rapidly respond to changing fashion trends (Joy et al., 2012). The expansion of e-commerce and social media platforms has further accelerated the consumption of fast fashion products among youths (Soto-Acosta et al., 2015; Conales & Burdeos, 2024).

In Malaysia, youths are among the largest consumers of international fashion products. Sabahan youths represent an important market segment because they are highly active on social media and are constantly exposed to global fashion trends and influencer marketing (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Yapp & Yapp, 2024). Despite the growing popularity of international fast fashion products, empirical evidence on the determinants of purchase intention among youths in Sabah remains limited.

Most previous studies have focused on consumers in Western countries and Peninsular Malaysia (Joy et al., 2012). Consequently, limited evidence exists regarding the factors that influence the purchase intention of young consumers in East Malaysia. This study addresses this gap by examining the effects of brand sustainability, social factors, and product accessibility on purchase intention among Sabahan youths.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour proposed by Ajzen (1991) explains that behavioural intention is determined by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. This theory has been widely applied in consumer behaviour and marketing research (Ajzen, 2002; Krueger et al., 2000). In the context of fast fashion consumption, TPB provides a suitable theoretical framework for explaining consumers' intentions to purchase international fashion products.

Brand Sustainability

Brand sustainability refers to consumers' perceptions regarding the environmental and ethical practices of a company (Joy et al., 2012). Sustainable brands often adopt environmentally friendly production processes, ethical sourcing practices, and corporate social responsibility initiatives to enhance their reputation and consumer trust. Previous studies have found that consumers, particularly younger generations, are becoming increasingly concerned about sustainability issues and are more likely to support brands that demonstrate responsible practices (Stern, 2000).

H1: Brand sustainability positively influences purchase intention.

Social Factors

Social factors refer to the influence of family members, peers, social media and influencers on individual behaviour (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In collectivist societies such as Malaysia, social approval and peer influence play an important role in shaping purchasing decisions (Yapp & Yapp, 2024). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that social influence significantly affects consumers' intentions to purchase fashion products, particularly among Generation Z and young adults who are highly engaged with social networking platforms (Loo Ying Wing et al., 2023).

H2: Social factors positively influence purchase intention.

Product Accessibility

Product accessibility refers to the ease of obtaining products through physical stores and online platforms (Seiders et al., 2005). Accessibility encompasses factors such as product availability, convenience of purchase, delivery efficiency, and ease of obtaining information about products. Previous studies have shown that consumers are more likely to purchase products that are readily available and easily accessible (Krbova & Pavelek, 2015). The growth of e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, and TikTok Shop has substantially improved product accessibility and has positively influenced consumers' online purchasing behaviour (Conales & Burdeos, 2024).

H3: Product accessibility positively influences purchase intention.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the factors influencing Sabahan youths' intention to purchase international fast fashion products. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to test the relationships between brand sustainability, social factors, product accessibility, and purchase intention using statistical techniques. The target population consisted of youths residing in Sabah aged between 18 and 30 years old who had prior experience purchasing or were familiar with international fast fashion products.

A purposive sampling technique was employed because respondents were selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed via social media platforms (Wright, 2005). The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and measurement items relating to purchase intention, brand sustainability, social factors, and product accessibility. A total of 78 usable responses were obtained and used for the final analysis.

All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data were analysed using SmartPLS 4.0 which is appropriate for prediction-oriented studies and exploratory research (Chin, 1998; Hair

et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2009). Reliability and validity assessments followed the recommendations of Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Sarstedt and Cheah (2019). Furthermore, collinearity assessments were conducted to minimise the risk of misleading structural relationships and common method bias (Kock & Lynn, 2012).

4. Results

A total of 78 usable responses were obtained and included in the final analysis. Female respondents represented 66.7% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 33.3%. The majority of the respondents were between 18 and 22 years old, indicating that the sample primarily consisted of young consumers who are highly exposed to international fashion trends and digital shopping platforms.

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.854 to 0.951, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.543 to 0.797, indicating acceptable convergent validity as all values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). These findings suggest that the measurement items were both reliable and valid for assessing the proposed constructs.

The structural model revealed that social factors significantly influenced purchase intention ($\beta = 0.414$, $t = 2.794$, $p = 0.003$), supporting H2. Product accessibility also significantly influenced purchase intention ($\beta = 0.336$, $t = 1.844$, $p = 0.033$), supporting H3. However, brand sustainability did not significantly influence purchase intention ($\beta = 0.071$, $t = 0.441$, $p = 0.330$), resulting in the rejection of H1. Furthermore, the model explained 55.4% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.554$), indicating moderate predictive power (Hair et al., 2022).

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that social factors are the strongest predictor of purchase intention among Sabahan youths. The significant relationship between social factors and purchase intention indicates that family members, peers, and social media influencers play an important role in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasised the importance of social influence and subjective norms in determining consumer behaviour and purchase intention (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Yapp & Yapp, 2024). The finding also supports the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which suggests that subjective norms significantly influence an individual's behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). Given that young consumers are highly active on social media platforms, recommendations and opinions from peers and influencers may substantially affect their purchasing decisions regarding international fast fashion products.

The findings also demonstrated that product accessibility significantly influences purchase intention. This suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase international fast fashion products when such products are easily accessible through physical stores

and online platforms. The finding is consistent with previous studies that reported that convenience and ease of obtaining products positively influence consumer purchase decisions (Seiders et al., 2005; Krbová & Pavelek, 2015). The rapid growth of e-commerce platforms and online shopping applications has further increased consumers' ability to access international fashion products conveniently. Therefore, greater product accessibility enhances consumers' perceived behavioural control and subsequently strengthens their intention to purchase international fast fashion products.

Contrary to expectations, brand sustainability did not significantly influence purchase intention among Sabahan youths. Although young consumers increasingly express concern regarding environmental and sustainability issues, these concerns may not necessarily translate into actual purchasing behaviour. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that consumers often prioritise product trends, affordability, and convenience over sustainability considerations when purchasing fast fashion products (Joy et al., 2012; Stern, 2000). The finding implies that environmental awareness among Sabahan youths may still be insufficient to influence their purchasing decisions. Consequently, sustainability initiatives implemented by international fast fashion brands may not yet constitute a primary determinant of purchase intention in the Sabah context.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the factors influencing Sabahan youths' intention to purchase international fast fashion products by investigating the effects of brand sustainability, social factors, and product accessibility on purchase intention. The findings revealed that social factors and product accessibility significantly influence purchase intention, whereas brand sustainability does not significantly influence purchase intention. The findings indicate that Sabahan youths are more likely to be influenced by peers, social media, and the accessibility of products than by sustainability considerations when making purchasing decisions.

The study contributes to the existing literature by extending the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the context of international fast fashion consumption among youths in East Malaysia. Furthermore, the findings provide practical insights for international fashion retailers in developing effective marketing strategies that emphasise social influence and enhance product accessibility to attract young consumers in Sabah. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional variables and larger samples to further improve the understanding of consumer purchase behaviour towards international fast fashion products.

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