

Unveiling the Green Purchase Gap: A Qualitative Investigation into Consumer Decision-Making for Sustainable Products.

Unzil Al Huda¹

¹ Universitas Nurul Jadid

Email: unzilhuda@gmail.com¹

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Abstract:

This study investigates the green purchase gap in consumer decision-making for sustainable fashion products, with a specific focus on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in ecoprint and thrifting businesses in East Java, Indonesia. The increasing public awareness of environmental sustainability has encouraged the growth of sustainable fashion; however, positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly products do not always translate into actual purchasing behavior. This study aims to explore how consumers interpret sustainable fashion products and identify the factors that shape the gap between environmental concern and real purchase decisions. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to capture the complexity of consumer experiences and considerations in a specific socio-economic context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings reveal that the green purchase gap is influenced not by the absence of environmental awareness, but by the interaction between sustainability values and practical consumption considerations, including price, product quality, hygiene, style compatibility, perceived risk, and trust in sustainability claims. Consumers tend to support sustainable fashion at the attitudinal level, yet actual purchasing decisions remain contingent upon whether such products are perceived as relevant, credible, and valuable in everyday consumption. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on sustainable consumer behavior by offering an interpretive and contextual understanding of the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption. Practically, the findings suggest that MSMEs should strengthen transparent communication, product storytelling, quality assurance, and value-based marketing strategies to reduce consumer hesitation and enhance actual purchase behavior. This study is limited to sustainable fashion MSMEs in East Java and the consumer perspective; therefore, future research is encouraged to expand to other sectors, regions, and methodological approaches for broader generalization.

Keywords: *green purchase gap; sustainable fashion; consumer decision-making; ecoprint; thrifting; MSMEs*

Abstrak:

Studi ini meneliti kesenjangan pembelian hijau dalam pengambilan keputusan konsumen untuk produk fesyen berkelanjutan, dengan fokus khusus pada usaha

mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) yang bergerak di bidang ecoprint dan bisnis barang bekas di Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Meningkatnya kesadaran publik tentang keberlanjutan lingkungan telah mendorong pertumbuhan fesyen berkelanjutan; namun, sikap positif terhadap produk ramah lingkungan tidak selalu diterjemahkan ke dalam perilaku pembelian aktual. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana konsumen menafsirkan produk fesyen berkelanjutan dan mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang membentuk kesenjangan antara kepedulian lingkungan dan keputusan pembelian nyata. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus digunakan untuk menangkap kompleksitas pengalaman dan pertimbangan konsumen dalam konteks sosial-ekonomi tertentu. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, dan dianalisis menggunakan kondensasi data, tampilan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kesenjangan pembelian hijau dipengaruhi bukan oleh kurangnya kesadaran lingkungan, tetapi oleh interaksi antara nilai-nilai keberlanjutan dan pertimbangan konsumsi praktis, termasuk harga, kualitas produk, kebersihan, kesesuaian gaya, risiko yang dirasakan, dan kepercayaan pada klaim keberlanjutan. Konsumen cenderung mendukung fesyen berkelanjutan pada tingkat sikap, namun keputusan pembelian aktual tetap bergantung pada apakah produk tersebut dianggap relevan, kredibel, dan bernilai dalam konsumsi sehari-hari. Secara teoritis, studi ini berkontribusi pada literatur tentang perilaku konsumen berkelanjutan dengan menawarkan pemahaman interpretatif dan kontekstual tentang kesenjangan sikap-perilaku dalam konsumsi fesyen berkelanjutan. Secara praktis, temuan menunjukkan bahwa UMKM harus memperkuat komunikasi transparan, penceritaan produk, jaminan kualitas, dan strategi pemasaran berbasis nilai untuk mengurangi keraguan konsumen dan meningkatkan perilaku pembelian aktual. Studi ini terbatas pada UMKM fesyen berkelanjutan di Jawa Timur dan perspektif konsumen; oleh karena itu, penelitian selanjutnya didorong untuk memperluas ke sektor, wilayah, dan pendekatan metodologis lain untuk generalisasi yang lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: *kesenjangan pembelian ramah lingkungan; fesyen berkelanjutan; pengambilan keputusan konsumen; ecoprint; belanja barang bekas; UMKM*

INTRODUCTION

The development of sustainability issues has made consumer consumption patterns a crucial concern in social, economic, and environmental life. In this context, research on purchasing decisions for sustainable products is crucial for the wider community because consumer behavior no longer only impacts individual satisfaction but also environmental sustainability, ethical production practices, and the direction of local economic development (Todeschini, et al., 2017). The fashion industry is one of the sectors most frequently associated with waste, resource exploitation, and a culture of fast consumption, making a shift toward sustainable fashion an urgent need (McNeill, & Moore., 2015). Ecoprint and thrifting-based MSMEs present a more environmentally friendly alternative, offering more responsible production and consumption practices (Papadopoulou, et al., 2022). However, the success of this transformation depends heavily on consumers' decisions to actually purchase these products (Jung, & Jin., 2014). Therefore, this research is important because it helps understand why environmental awareness has not always translated into concrete purchasing actions, while contributing to society, businesses, and the sustainable development agenda (Niinimäki, et al., 2020).

The general problem underlying this research is the gap between

increasing public awareness of the importance of environmentally friendly consumption and their still low consistency in choosing sustainable products in their daily practices (Atik, & Ozdamar Ertekin., 2023). Many consumers express support for environmental conservation, waste reduction, and ethical consumption, but when faced with real choices in the marketplace, they often choose conventional products perceived as cheaper, more practical, or more familiar (Niinimäki., 2015). This situation creates serious social and economic problems because it hinders the growth of sustainable businesses, including fashion MSMEs attempting to implement environmentally friendly values in their production and distribution processes (Pal, & Gander., 2018). As a result, efforts towards a green economy often stop at the discourse level without generating significant changes in consumption behavior (Joy, et al., 2012). Without a thorough understanding of these issues, sustainable business development will struggle to scale up, and their impact on society will be limited (Ozdamar, & Atik., 2015).

Field observations indicate that sustainable fashion MSMEs in East Java, particularly those engaged in ecoprinting and thrifting, are beginning to gain public attention, particularly among young people familiar with environmentally friendly lifestyle issues (Ozdamar, et al., 2020). Ecoprint products are seen as unique because they use natural dyes and a production process that is closer to nature, while thrifting is perceived as a reusable consumption practice that can reduce textile waste (Chen, et al., 2021). However, interest in these products has not always been followed by consistent purchasing decisions (Adamkiewicz, et al., 2022). On the one hand, consumers show interest in the sustainability values, product stories, and social identity inherent in eco-friendly fashion (Brydges, et al., 2020). On the other hand, they also consider price, quality, hygiene image, fashion trends, comfort, and trust in the product (McNeill, & Venter., 2019). This phenomenon demonstrates a green purchase gap, the gap between positive attitudes toward sustainability and actual purchasing behavior, evident in the dynamics of sustainable fashion product consumption at the MSME level.

Previous research has extensively discussed green consumer behavior, green purchase intention, and the factors influencing consumer decisions about environmentally friendly products (Pui-Yan, & Choi., 2012). Various studies have shown that environmental concern, sustainability knowledge, personal values, social norms, perceived quality, and brand trust play a role in shaping purchase intentions (Owusu-Wiredu., 2024). In the field of sustainable fashion, research has also highlighted the importance of ethical awareness, perceived value, self-identity, and the influence of social media on consumer preferences (Nguyen, et al., 2021). However, most of this research tends to use a quantitative approach that emphasizes relationships between variables and statistically measures influence (Perry, et al., 2025). This approach provides an important overview but fails to fully explain how consumers interpret sustainability when faced with concrete purchasing choices (Arimany, et al., 2025). Therefore, studies that delve deeper into consumer experiences, considerations, and ambivalence in the context of sustainable fashion

consumption are needed (Behal, et al., 2025).

On the other hand, studies on sustainable fashion have also focused too much on large brands, large-scale urban markets, or consumers in general without paying sufficient attention to the context of local MSMEs with their unique characteristics (Vassalo, et al., 2024). Yet, ecoprint and thrifting MSMEs in East Java thrive in a social, cultural, and economic environment distinct from the mainstream fashion industry (Rognoli, et al., 2022). Local consumers interact not only with products but also with community narratives, cultural values, affordability, and perceptions of product uniqueness (Casciani, et al., 2022). A weakness of previous research lies in the limited exploration of how consumers actually weigh sustainability values against practical considerations such as price, style, cleanliness, and trust in quality (Schmidheiny., 1992). This is where this research comes in: filling this research gap by qualitatively examining the green purchase gap in the context of sustainable fashion MSMEs in East Java. This research's contribution lies in its attempt to explain purchasing decisions as a meaningful process, not simply the result of rational calculations.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on uncovering the green purchase gap through a qualitative approach, positioning consumer decisions as complex, contextual, and influenced by subjective experiences. Unlike previous research, which has largely focused on purchase intentions or determinants separately, this study seeks to understand how consumers negotiate sustainability values with everyday considerations when purchasing ecoprint and thrifting products from MSMEs in East Java. This state-of-the-art research is evident in the integration of two forms of sustainable fashion ecoprint and thrifting into a single analytical framework to examine how sustainability is interpreted in products with different characteristics. This research is crucial because without a thorough understanding of why consumers don't always purchase sustainable products, MSMEs will struggle to design appropriate marketing, education, and value communication strategies. Therefore, this research is both theoretically and practically relevant for strengthening a locally based sustainable economy.

Based on this description, this research problem focuses on how consumers make purchasing decisions for sustainable fashion products and why there is a gap between environmental awareness and actual purchasing behavior among ecoprint and thrifting MSMEs in East Java. The tentative argument in this study is that the green purchase gap does not occur solely due to low environmental awareness, but rather because purchasing decisions are shaped by the interaction of sustainability values, risk perception, economic considerations, social identity, product experience, and consumer trust levels. In other words, even if consumers have positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion, purchasing decisions are still influenced by how they assess the product's relevance to their needs, lifestyle, and comfort. This research is expected to contribute to the development of literature on sustainable consumer behavior and provide practical input for fashion MSMEs in East Java to design more effective communication and marketing strategies to bridge the gap

between green awareness and actual purchasing actions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Devetak, et al., 2025). This design was chosen because the research seeks to deeply understand the consumer decision-making process for sustainable fashion products and explain the green purchase gap in a specific context, namely ecoprint and thrifting MSMEs in East Java. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore consumer meanings, considerations, experiences, and ambivalence, which cannot always be explained through quantitative measurements (Hariram, et al., 2023). Meanwhile, a case study is deemed appropriate because the phenomenon under study is strongly influenced by the social, cultural, and economic context in which purchasing decisions occur (Bocken, & Short., 2016). In this research, consumer decisions are not understood as standalone actions, but rather as the result of the interaction between sustainability values, perceived quality, price, product image, and consumption experiences (Edwards., 2005). Therefore, the case study design allows researchers to obtain a holistic, contextual, and interpretive picture of how consumers interpret sustainable fashion products and why environmental awareness is not always translated into actual purchasing behavior (McCormick, et al., 2013).

The research location was determined to be a sustainable fashion MSME in East Java engaged in ecoprint and thrifting. The location selection was purposive, considering that East Java has a fairly dynamic development of creative MSMEs, including businesses promoting the concept of sustainability in fashion. Furthermore, ecoprint and thrifting were chosen because they represent two distinct forms of sustainable fashion practices: ecoprint emphasizes environmentally friendly production processes and the use of natural materials, while thrifting emphasizes re-consumption as an effort to reduce textile waste (Koop, & van Leeuwen, 2017). This location was chosen because it provides a relevant empirical context for examining how consumers evaluate, compare, and make purchasing decisions for products bearing sustainability claims (Czutkowna., 2025). Therefore, East Java serves not only as a geographic research space but also as a socio-economic context that allows researchers to understand the relationship between sustainability values, local market characteristics, and consumer behavior toward sustainable fashion products at the MSME level.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation (Mandot, & Bambhaniya, 2026). In-depth interviews were used as the primary technique to explore how consumers understand the concept of sustainable fashion, their reasons for being interested or hesitant to purchase ecoprint and thrifting products, and the factors that influence their final decisions (Rani, et al., 2025). Informants were selected purposively, namely consumers who had purchased, considered purchasing, or canceled purchases of sustainable fashion products from the MSMEs concerned, ensuring that the data obtained accurately aligns with the research focus (de Oliveira, et al., 2025).

Observations were conducted to understand the context of interactions between consumers and products, both in offline and online sales spaces, including how products are presented, how consumers respond to product visuals and narratives, and how the transaction atmosphere is formed (Rossi, & Morone, 2023). Documentation was used as supporting data through a review of product catalogs, promotional media, social media posts, customer testimonials, and other marketing communication materials (Kozłowski, et al., 2018). Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data condensation, data reduction, data display, and data verification (Al Aghbari, et al., 2025). In the data condensation and reduction stages, researchers selected, focused, simplified, and coded raw data from interviews, observations, and documentation into relevant themes, such as perceptions of sustainability, price considerations, quality, cleanliness, social identity, and trust in the product (Papamichael, et al., 2024). The data was then presented in the form of thematic narratives, matrices, and categorizations to clarify the relationships between findings (Saha, et al., 2022). The final stage, verification, was carried out by critically interpreting data patterns and drawing conclusions that were continuously tested for consistency throughout the research process, ensuring that the research results remained grounded in empirical evidence and the field context.

Table 1: Data Validity Check

Data Validity Aspects	Techniques Used	Application in Research
Credibility	Source triangulation	Comparing information from various informants, such as consumers, MSME owners, and marketing managers, to see the consistency of meaning and experience related to purchasing decisions for sustainable fashion products.
Credibility	Engineering triangulation	Compare the results of in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation so that interpretation does not rely on one type of data.
Credibility	Member checking	Reconfirm the summary of interview results or initial interpretations with several informants to ensure the meaning matches the experiences they convey.
Dependability	Audit trail	Compile research process notes systematically, including interview guidelines, transcripts, field notes, coding processes, and analytical decisions.
Confirmability	Peer discussion	Discuss the results of categorization, themes, and data interpretation with academic colleagues or supervisors to minimize the researcher's subjective bias.
Transferability	Thick description	Presenting the research context, characteristics of MSMEs, informant profiles, and consumer decision-making situations in detail so that readers can assess the possibility of applying the findings to other contexts.
Credibility	Persistence of observation	Conducting repeated observations of consumer interactions with products and the sales environment to gain a deeper understanding of the green purchase gap

Data Validity Aspects	Techniques Used	Application in Research
phenomenon.		

In this study, data validity checks were conducted to ensure that the findings had an adequate level of credibility, consistency, and traceability (John, et al., 2025). Triangulation of sources and techniques was used to strengthen the validity of interpretations, while member checking was applied to ensure that the meaning captured by the researcher remained consistent with the experiences of the informants (Bengtsson, et al., 2018). Furthermore, audit trails, peer discussions, and rich descriptive presentations were used to support the dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research results. Through these procedures, this study strives to maintain methodological integrity and produce scientifically accountable findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This sub-finding operationally in the field refers to the gap between consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion products and their actual purchasing decisions. In the context of this research, the green purchase gap appears when consumers express support for sustainability values, environmental awareness, and more responsible consumption practices, but in actual purchasing situations still delay, cancel, or deprioritize ecoprint and thrifting products. In the field, this gap arises not because consumers completely reject sustainable products, but because purchasing decisions are influenced by more complex considerations, such as price, perceived quality, product cleanliness, style fit, comfort, and the level of trust in the seller's claimed sustainability values. Thus, this sub-finding not only demonstrates a gap between green awareness and purchasing actions but also demonstrates that consumer decisions are shaped by a negotiation between ideal values and practical needs in the context of everyday consumption.

Table 2: Interview Excerpts on the Green Purchase Gap in Sustainable Fashion Products

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
“I like the ecoprint concept because it looks natural and unique, but sometimes the price feels more expensive than regular clothes, so I think twice before buying.”	Price sensitivity	Ecoprint consumers
“I'm interested in thrifting, especially since it's considered to reduce waste, but I'm still picky because I'm worried about the cleanliness and quality of the items.”	Product risk perception	Thrifting consumers
“I actually support eco-friendly products, but if the design doesn't suit my style, then I end up not buying it.”	Lifestyle and identity compatibility	Young consumers
“Sustainable products are great, but sometimes I'm not sure whether the process is truly environmentally friendly or just a promotional strategy.”	Trust in sustainability claims	Potential consumers
“I am more interested in buying if the seller explains the product's story, for example the ingredients, process, and impact on the environment.”	Product narrative value	Ecoprint buyers
“I have bought thrift clothes, but not often, because I have to really feel it's worth it in terms of price, style, and condition of the item.”	Comprehensive value evaluation	Thrifting buyers

The table above shows that the green purchase gap stems from the tension between value orientation and utilitarian considerations in purchasing decisions. On the one hand, consumers acknowledge that ecoprint and thrifting products have positive connotations due to their association with environmental awareness, uniqueness, and more responsible consumption. However, on the other hand, these connotations do not automatically result in purchase. The data shows that consumers continue to prioritize price, quality, cleanliness, and style compatibility as primary filters before purchasing. This suggests that environmental awareness is only one element in consumers' consideration structure, not the sole basis for decision-making. Critically, these findings indicate that sustainable purchasing behavior cannot be explained simply by the assumption that higher environmental awareness leads to a higher likelihood of purchase. Instead, consumers treat sustainability as a value that must be compatible with their functional and symbolic expectations for fashion products.

Furthermore, the table also shows that purchasing barriers are not only economic but also interpretive. Consumers do not simply calculate whether a product is expensive or cheap; they also evaluate whether the product is

trustworthy, aligns with their identity, and is sufficiently relevant to their personal preferences. For thrifting products, for example, concerns about cleanliness and condition indicate a perceived risk that directly influences purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, for ecoprint products, consumers appear more sensitive to price and perceived value. The finding regarding skepticism about sustainability claims is also important, as it suggests that consumers don't always passively accept the "eco-friendly" label. Researchers interpret that the green purchase gap among sustainable fashion MSMEs in East Java occurs because sustainability values have not yet been fully translated into consumption values that are believed, felt, and perceived sufficiently to outweigh other practical considerations.

This interpretation is supported by field observations, which show that consumer interactions with sustainable fashion products tend to be evaluative and cautious. At several MSME sales outlets and online promotional media, researchers observed that consumers appeared attracted to product visuals, particularly unique ecoprint motifs and model options on thrifted items. However, before making a decision, they first examined the price, materials, condition, and description of the production process. For thrifted products, consumer attention often focused on cleanliness, product defects, and usability, while for ecoprinted products, consumers were more likely to inquire about the price and durability. Researchers also found that products accompanied by a clear narrative about materials, processes, and environmental values were more likely to attract attention and build consumer trust. These observations suggest that purchasing decisions do not stop with a moral appreciation for sustainability, but depend on the product and seller's success in translating green values into tangible evidence that consumers can understand and feel.

Overall, this research confirms that the green purchase gap in sustainable fashion consumption occurs when consumers' normative support for sustainability is not strong enough to translate into actual purchasing decisions. Consumers don't inherently reject ecoprint or thrifting products, but they place sustainability values above other equally powerful considerations, such as price, quality, cleanliness, style, and trust in product claims. In other words, the primary problem lies not in low environmental awareness, but rather in the lack of full integration of sustainability values into everyday consumption logic. Therefore, these findings make it easier for readers to understand that the decision to purchase sustainable products is not solely a moral one, but a multidimensional one, in which consumers continually negotiate environmental ideals with their practical needs and consumer identities.

The pattern emerging from the data indicates that the higher the level of consumer uncertainty regarding a product's tangible benefits, quality, and relevance, the greater the likelihood of a green purchase gap. Conversely, when sustainable products combine environmental value, visual appeal, compelling quality, and an authentic narrative, consumers' likelihood of purchasing increases. Another apparent pattern is that sustainability has not yet emerged as an independent purchase motive; it is only effective when reinforced by other factors such as trust, style fit, and perceived value. Thus, the data shows that

the green purchase gap is not a single phenomenon, but rather the result of a meeting between consumers' moral orientation and market realities that demand concrete proof of product quality and benefits.

Table 3: Influence of Ideals on Purchasing Decisions of Sustainable Fashion Products

Informant's Position	Interview Excerpts	Indicators
Ecoprint consumers	“If the product is unique, the story is clear, and I know why the price is what it is, I will be more confident in buying it.”	Product value transparency
Thrifting consumers	“I'm willing to buy thrift if the item is clean, in good condition, and the style is still suitable for use.”	Product quality and suitability
Young consumers	“I'm more interested in sustainable products that are still fashionable, so they're not only environmentally friendly but also suit my style.”	Conformity of identity and style
Repeat buyer	“If the seller can explain the process honestly and without exaggeration, I will trust them more and tend to buy again.”	Trust and authenticity
Ecoprint MSME actors	“Consumers are usually more confident in purchasing after we explain the ingredients, process, and meaning behind the product.”	Consumer education
Thrifting MSMEs	“The most important thing is whether consumers feel the item is suitable, aesthetic, and worth it.”	Overall value perception

The idealized influence table above shows that purchasing decisions for sustainable fashion products tend to be strengthened when consumers not only understand the abstract value of sustainability but also perceive concrete evidence of that value in the form of quality, transparency, and personal fit. This means that the idealized influence on purchases lies not solely in green slogans, but rather in the success of MSMEs in translating sustainability into a compelling consumption experience. Transparency regarding production processes, product cleanliness and suitability, and honest explanations of product values have been shown to be elements that can reduce consumer skepticism. In this regard, sustainability works most effectively when it is presented as a tangible, communicative value, and connected to buyer expectations.

Furthermore, this table shows that the idealized influence is also strongly influenced by the fit between the product and the consumer's identity. Consumers not only want to feel "good" about purchasing environmentally friendly products but also want to maintain a look that aligns with their style, self-image, and practical needs. This suggests that purchasing decisions for sustainable fashion are both symbolic and functional. Researchers interpret that sustainable products will be more readily accepted by the market when sustainability values are positioned not as a moral burden, but as part of a relevant, attractive, and credible lifestyle. Thus, the ideal influence on purchasing decisions is formed from the integration of education, product quality, aesthetic value, and consumer trust in the authenticity of MSMEs.

The pattern descriptions from the data above indicate that consumers tend to move from initial interest to purchasing decisions only when there is a strong bridge between sustainability values and consumption values. The first pattern that emerges is that consumers require tangible validation, whether through product condition, seller explanations, or product suitability to their lifestyle. The second pattern shows that trust is the primary connecting factor between positive attitudes and purchasing actions. The greater the transparency and the greater the product's fit with consumer needs, the smaller the gap between green intentions and actual purchases. Thus, the general pattern confirms that the green purchase gap can be narrowed if MSMEs are able to manage sustainability not only as an ethical value, but also as a market value that consumers understand, trust, and desire.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the green purchase gap in sustainable fashion products does not arise because consumers reject the value of sustainability, but rather because that value must compete with more directly perceived considerations, such as price, quality, cleanliness, style fit, and belief in eco-friendly claims (De Brito, et al., 2008). This finding is consistent with the literature stating that the gap between intention and behavior is a central issue in green consumption, including in the context of sustainable clothing, where positive attitudes toward the environment do not automatically translate into actual purchases (Ekström, & Salomonson., 2014). Previous studies have also confirmed that in sustainable fashion, economic risk, aesthetic risk, and concerns about greenwashing are often the main obstacles to the realization of purchase intentions (Hjorth, & Bagheri., 2006). In the context of this study, this pattern is evident in consumers of ecoprint and thrifting MSMEs in East Java who normatively support eco-friendly fashion but still delay purchases when the functional and symbolic benefits of the product are not sufficiently convincing. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that the decision to purchase sustainable products is the result of a negotiation between moral commitment and the rationality of everyday consumption.

At the same time, this study also demonstrates a slightly different nuance from some literature that emphasizes the role of green attitudes, environmental concerns, or pro-sustainability orientations as primary drivers of purchasing decisions (Neto., 2003). Field data actually shows that environmental concerns operate as a precondition, not a final determinant (Budeanu., 2005). New consumers are more likely to purchase when sustainable products also meet their expectations for design, wearability, cleanliness, and identity fit. This aligns with findings showing that in sustainable fashion, consumers evaluate products not only on green attributes, but also on conventional attributes such as performance, comfort, aesthetics, and alignment with personal preferences. In other words, sustainability does not serve as a stand-alone purchase motive but must be perceived as congruent with consumer needs. At this point, the study's findings extend the literature by demonstrating that at the local MSME level, particularly in ecoprint and

thrifting businesses, purchasing barriers lie not simply in a lack of intention, but in a weak integration between green values and consumption values deemed relevant by the market.

The findings on consumer skepticism toward sustainability claims are also important because they demonstrate that the green purchase gap is not solely related to personal preference but also to market credibility. Previous literature has highlighted that concerns about greenwashing, limited information, and low confidence in the quality of green products can widen the gap between intention and behavior (Bhojwani, 2025). This research confirms this, particularly when consumers stated that they were more confident in purchasing if the seller explained the product's story, materials, processes, and environmental impacts honestly and easily (Wan, et al., 2019). The key difference between this research and some previous studies is that the trust dimension emerged not only as trust in green labels in general, but also as trust in MSMEs, product narratives, and the concrete evidence accompanying the product. This suggests that in the context of MSME-based sustainable fashion, credibility is not built solely through formal certification, but also through transparent communication and narrative engagement with consumers.

Theoretically, this study contributes by strengthening the understanding that the green purchase gap should be read not only through the classical intention-behavior framework, but also through a more interpretive and contextual perspective (Chowdhury, 2025). The research findings show that purchasing decisions for sustainable products are shaped by a multi-layered evaluation process that encompasses moral, functional, symbolic, and relational dimensions (Polonsky, 2011). This contribution is important because many previous studies tend to model green purchasing behavior in a linear fashion, while the results of this study indicate that consumers are actually engaged in a continuous negotiation between environmental ideals and consumption realities. In this context, this study expands the discussion on the attitude-behavior gap by positioning the quality of product narratives, risk perceptions, and identity congruence as important mechanisms that bridge or widen the gap. Thus, from a scientific perspective, this study contributes to the literature on sustainable consumer behavior by demonstrating that in sustainable fashion MSMEs, actual purchases are better understood as the result of meaning construction, rather than simply a response to pre-existing green attitudes.

Practically, the results of this study suggest that sustainable fashion MSMEs in East Java cannot simply emphasize the "eco-friendly" label in their marketing strategies. Businesses need to ensure that sustainability values are translated into concrete, easily evaluable benefits for consumers, for example through price transparency, explanations of production processes, assurance of cleanliness and quality, curated designs relevant to market styles, and authentic product narratives. Another implication is the need for communication strategies that reduce perceived risk and increase trust, as consumers appear more willing to purchase when they understand the rationale for prices, the condition of the goods, and the authenticity of sustainability claims. More broadly, this study suggests that closing the green purchase gap requires an

integration of market education and strengthening the product's value proposition. This means that sustainability must be positioned not merely as a moral imperative, but as a value that is attractive, feasible, and compatible with everyday consumption experiences. This is where the main practical relevance of this research lies: helping MSMEs design market strategies that connect consumers' green awareness with actual purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that the most important finding lies in the fact that the green purchase gap in sustainable fashion products is not caused by low consumer awareness of environmental issues, but rather by a lack of connection between sustainability values and consumers' practical considerations in real-life purchasing situations. The main lesson from this study is that the decision to purchase sustainable products is not based solely on moral awareness, but is shaped by the interaction between price, quality, cleanliness, design, trust in product claims, and fit with the consumer's identity. Therefore, sustainability only becomes effective as a purchasing driver when it can be translated into tangible, relevant, and credible consumption values. From a scientific perspective, the strength of this paper lies in its contribution to enriching the literature on sustainable consumer behavior through a qualitative approach that positions purchasing decisions as an interpretive and contextual process. This study also expands the discussion on the attitude-behavior gap by demonstrating that, in the context of sustainable fashion MSMEs, actual purchases are heavily influenced by the negotiation between environmental ideals and everyday consumption logic.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the research's focus on sustainable fashion MSMEs in the ecoprint and thrifting sectors in East Java makes these findings indirect generalizable to other sustainable product sectors or to different regions. Second, this study focuses primarily on the consumer perspective, thus failing to explore broader comparisons with the perspectives of business actors, communities, or other market actors in shaping the green purchase gap. Third, the use of a qualitative case study approach provides depth of understanding but limits the range of contexts that can be compared. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the study object to other sustainable product sectors, compare consumer behavior across regions or market segments, and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive explanation. Future research could also examine the role of digital communication strategies, brand trust, and the influence of social communities to deepen understanding of how the gap between green awareness and purchasing actions can be narrowed.

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