UNDERSTANDING GEN Z'S FASHION CHOICES: ATTITUDINAL, SOCIAL, AND BEHAVIORAL DRIVERS OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHING CONSUMPTION IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

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Understanding Gen Z's fashion choices: attitudinal, social, and behavioral drivers of second-hand clothing consumption in Finland

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Fast fashion emerges as a leading contributor to environmental degradation due to textile waste and short product lifecycles. In Finland, Gen Z remains reliant on fast fashion despite strong sustainability concerns, reflecting a value–action gap. This thesis investigates the attitudinal, social, and behavioural drivers that drive the intention of Finnish Gen Z consumers to adopt second-hand clothing as a sustainable alternative to fast fashion, thereby understanding the profile of such consumers and recommending strategies for circular fashion brands. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study examines six key constructs: Perceived Functional Value (PFV), Emotional and Identity Alignment (EIA), Social Media and Influencer Impact (SMI), Fear of Social Criticism (FSC), Perceived Access and Convenience (PAC), and Perceived Financial Feasibility (PFF).

The impact of these variables was quantitatively analyzed using SPSS with data collected through a questionnaire distributed to 100 Gen Z consumers who consume fast fashion. Findings revealed that the sample was predominantly female, aged 24-26 years, mostly students earning €1,000–1,499 per month, and spending under €100 on clothing. Two-thirds followed fashion content, with fast fashion still being in demand. Regression analysis showed that PFV, EIA, SMI, PAC, and PFF significantly and positively shaped intention to adopt second-hand clothing consumption. By contrast, FSC had no significant effect, suggesting that Gen Z in Finland is less motivated by social judgment and more by tangible value, identity expression, and practical feasibility.

Theoretically, the study extends TPB by incorporating context-specific variables. Managerially, it provides insights for stakeholders to design strategies that enhance product functionality and identity alignment, leverage digital influence, and improve accessibility and affordability. By doing so, circular fashion initiatives can better align with Gen Z's evolving consumption patterns, thereby narrowing the value–action gap in sustainable clothing consumption.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PFV	Perceived Functional Value
EIA	Emotional and Identity Alignment
SMI	Social Media and Influencer Impact
FSC	Fear of Social Criticism
PAC	Perceived Access and Convenience
PFF	Perceived Financial Feasibility
SHC	Second-Hand Clothing
IASHC	Intention to Adopt Second-Hand Clothing
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable

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DECLARATIONS

Turnitin

The originality of this thesis has been reviewed with the Turnitin similarity checking service.

AI usage

The author of the thesis, Chathushka Navanjana Galhena, used the following AI tools during the preparation of the thesis:

ChatGPT

a. Purpose of use: To summarize lengthy academic articles, assess their relevance and theoretical alignment, and also translate the questionnaire into Finnish.

b. Explanation of the use of the tool: ChatGPT was used to generate concise summaries of long journal articles to support initial understanding of their key arguments, findings, and suitability for my review. The tool also helped clarify complex concepts when needed. All AI outputs were reviewed and rewritten by the author, and no unverified AI-generated text was used directly in the thesis.

Grammarly

a. Purpose of use: To conduct a final grammar and punctuation check.

b. Explanation of the use of the tool: Grammarly was used only for language refinements at the final editing stage. All suggestions were manually evaluated by the author.

Responsibility

Chathushka Galhena takes full responsibility for the content of this thesis and has reviewed and edited the content generated by the possible use of AI tools.

1 Introduction

The introduction chapter introduces the research by outlining the research purpose and its context. It outlines the key issues related to fast fashion, sustainability, and the emergence of circular fashion alternatives such as second-hand clothing (SHC), particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z) in Finland. The chapter then presents the research question, objectives, theoretical foundation, research significance, overview of the methodology, and limitations of the study. Together, these components establish the foundation for research.

1.1 Overview of the Research Context and Research Problem

According to Esbeih, et al. (2021), environmental pollution is increasingly endangering life on Earth, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable business practices across industries. Irrespective of the increased adoption of sustainable practices across industries, the fashion industry, however, remains one of the major contributors to environmental degradation, largely due to the rise of fast fashion. According to Fang (2023), fast fashion is a retail strategy adopted by businesses to produce and distribute large volumes of trendy and low-cost clothing at a rapid pace (p.166). “The fashion business has an influence on the environment since it generates more than 92 million tons of garbage each year and uses 1.5 trillion liters of water” (Fang, 2023, p. 167).

One of the most practical strategies to achieve sustainability is the Circular Economy (CE), which offers a restorative alternative that keeps materials in use and reduces waste (Esbeih, et al. 2021). In Finland, where climate action and environmental responsibility are culturally significant, Gen Z consumers are showing a willingness to adopt circular fashion thanks to its economic value, uniqueness, and alignment with environmental values (Federiko, 2022; Frahm et al., 2025, p. 653). SHC is often the most accessible form of circular fashion. Studies highlight that the SHC market is expected to grow significantly, reflecting a broader shift toward circular consumption behaviors (Mobarak et al., 2025, p. 2).

While the CE offers a clear path toward reducing textile waste and emissions, its integration into the fashion industry, especially in terms of the adoption of consumer-driven models such as secondhand shopping, has been slow and uneven. This reveals a deeper systemic challenge: macro-level sustainability frameworks and climate commitments are not translating into micro-level behavioral change, particularly at the consumer level, where the demand-side transformation is critical, indicating a significant value–action gap (Gurova, 2024; Richardson et al., 2022).

The value–action gap refers to the difference between what people believe and how they actually behave. In fashion, many Gen Z consumers value sustainability but still purchase fast fashion, showing that awareness alone does not lead to action (Gurova, 2024, p.303-304). Within the European context, according to the European Environment Agency (2024), in 2020, the EU-27 generated around 6.95 million tonnes of textile waste, equivalent to 16 kg per person, yet only 4.4 kg per person were collected and sorted for reuse or recycling. Further, even though Finland is an EU frontrunner in circular textile policy and public environmental awareness is high, behavioral data show a strong value–action gap. According to Morsen (2022, p.2), around 40,000 tonnes of used textiles ended up in waste bins in 2019, and about 61% of all discarded textiles were incinerated. Even within Helsinki´s advanced collection pilots, 63% of collected textiles still ended up as waste after sorting.

As per Mobarak et al. (2025), these challenges highlight that existing sustainability narratives often fail to resonate with the lived experiences, identity needs, and practical constraints of Gen Z consumers. These factors explain why Gen Z's sustainable values do not always turn into sustainable fashion behavior. Therefore, circular fashion businesses need more consumer-specific intelligence, especially regarding Gen Z´s sustainable consumption behavior. As a generation expected to play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable consumption, understanding their motivations and barriers is essential for shaping effective circular fashion strategies, or else climate goals in the fashion sector will remain out of reach.

Although sustainable consumption has been widely studied, several gaps remain. Existing studies rarely examine the value–action gap in Nordic markets. The psychological and social mechanisms driving Gen Z's inconsistent behavior remain underexplored, and most research focuses on general sustainable consumption rather than the specific adoption of second-hand clothing. Moreover, existing studies do not fully incorporate identity-related or social-media-driven influences that are central to Gen Z's fashion decisions. These gaps limit understanding of why sustainability values fail to translate into second-hand clothing adoption.

Therefore, the research problem of this study is that, despite strong sustainability values, Finnish Gen Z consumers continue to rely on fast fashion, showing a persistent value–action gap. What remains unclear is which attitudinal, social, and behavioral factors prevent these sustainability values from translating into the intention to adopt second-hand clothing. This lack of understanding forms the central problem that the present study seeks to address.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives

What attitudinal, social, and behavioral factors influence Finnish Gen Z consumers´ intention to adopt second-hand clothing (IASHC)?

Research Objectives:

- To examine the profile and current fashion practices of Gen Z consumers in Finland.
- To identify the attitudinal, social, and behavioral drivers that shape Gen Z's IASHC.
- To analyze how these drivers contribute to the value–action gap in Gen Z's sustainable fashion behaviors.
- To provide evidence-based implications for circular fashion brands and policymakers to support second-hand clothing adoption and leverage Gen Z's sustainability preferences as a competitive advantage.

1.3 Theoretical Foundation

To understand why Gen Z's sustainability values do not always translate into behavior, a behavioral framework is required that links psychological intentions to actual actions. Hence, this study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991), which focuses on how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intention and actual consumer behavior. Attitude refers to a person's overall positive or negative feelings about doing something. If a person believes that performing a behavior is good or beneficial, their attitude will be positive, and they are more likely to do it. Subjective norms refer to the social pressure a person feels from people around them. When others think they should do something, the person is more likely to follow that behavior. Perceived behavioral control means how easy or hard a person thinks it is to perform the behavior. If they believe they have enough time, money, or ability, their intention to do it becomes stronger. (Ajzen, 1991.) Hence, in this study, TPB helps to understand how these three factors, such as attitudinal, social, and behavioral, shape Finnish Gen Z consumers' IASHC.

Accordingly, this study uses the TPB to address the identified research problem of the value-action gap by examining six influencing factors. Perceived Functional Value and Emotional and Identity Alignment reflect how Gen Z's attitudes toward quality, usefulness, and self-expression shape their choices. Social Media and Influencer Impact and Fear of Social Criticism represent social influences that can either motivate or discourage second-hand shopping. Perceived Access and Convenience and Perceived Financial Feasibility capture the practical barriers that affect how easily consumers can act on their intentions. A detailed discussion of these theories and constructs is provided in Chapter 2.

1.4 Research Significance

The present research adds value to scholarly work as well as practice by tackling an important gap in understanding the behavioral dynamics behind Gen Z's fashion consumption in the context of sustainability. The study is linked to previous research on sustainable consumption and theories like the TPB and focuses more on the underexplored areas of Gen Z consumers in Finland and their fashion choices, thereby contributing to bridging the value-action gap. For instance, even though Gen Z consumers say that they care about climate change and want to be sustainable, many continue to purchase from fast fashion retailers (Williams & Hodges, 2020, p.3). According to Williams and Hodges (2020, p.1-4), the research´s significance is further enhanced due to focus on Gen Z due to their unique behavioral profile as a digitally native generation that actively engages in fashion through social media platforms. They are ethically conscious and expect brands to reflect their values, making them key drivers of sustainability-focused change.

There is limited quantitative research on circular fashion and consumer behavior in Nordic markets. Therefore, theoretically, the study enhances the explanatory power of the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) by integrating context-specific constructs such as identity alignment, social media influence, and perceived accessibility factors, particularly relevant to fashion-related choices. This not only advances TPB-based consumer behavior research but also aligns with emerging scholarship on demand-side sustainability solutions.

Practically, the findings will offer strategic guidance for circular fashion brands, sustainable entrepreneurs, international marketers, and policymakers seeking to develop targeted strategies and educational initiatives that resonate with Gen Z's emotional, functional, and social motivations. Moreover, research can support public institutions in designing campaigns that address the psychological and social factors deterring sustainable behavior. It may also serve as a foundation for developing digital platforms or second-hand fashion apps that are more aligned with Gen Z’s expectations of convenience, affordability, and social validation. Hence, this research contributes to academia and practice by providing insights into drivers for changing consumption patterns from fast fashion to sustainable alternatives.

1.5 Overview of Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design, collecting survey data from hundred Finnish Gen Z consumers who regularly or occasionally purchase fast fashion, using convenience sampling. A quantitative method was chosen as it enables an objective and systematic analysis of how attitudinal, social, and behavioral factors influence Gen Z’s IASHC. Using numerical data from a structured survey allows reliable hypothesis testing and supports evidence-based conclusions. The dataset was analyzed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) using descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and regression analysis to examine the relationships between the proposed constructs and the IASHC.

1.6 Scope of the study

- Geographical focus: The research is limited to consumers residing in Finland.
- Target population: Only Generation Z individuals (aged 18–28) who consume fast fashion and are aware of second-hand clothing alternatives were included.
- Research scope: The study focuses specifically on second-hand clothing adoption, excluding other circular fashion models such as rental, repair, or upcycling.
- Theoretical boundary: The research is guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and only variables aligned with the TPB framework, and its extensions are examined.
- Methodological scope: A quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire and SPSS-based analysis was used; qualitative insights were not explored.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

While study comprehensively investigated the drivers of Gen Z consumers' SHC behavior in Finland, the research is not without constraints that warrant acknowledgement. The findings of the study may not be generalizable to other consumer groups as well as other countries or cultural contexts, as the sample is based on Finland Gen Z consumers. Although the convenience-based approach led to a relatively high proportion of university students, this reflects the demographic reality that a significant share of Finland's Gen Z population is still engaged in higher education. Nevertheless, future studies could employ stratified or quota sampling across occupational categories to enhance representativeness. The study focuses exclusively on circular apparel, primarily second-hand fashion as a sustainable alternative, thus excluding other sustainable fashion models such as recycled clothing, rental services, or upcycled clothing. Hence, the study may not represent different consumer behaviors within the broader spectrum of sustainable consumption behaviors within the fashion industry.

Moreover, the research is based on only quantitative methods. Hence, the ability to explore the subjective perspectives of consumer fashion choices, such as emotional barriers, cultural stigma, etc., is hindered. Furthermore, the responses may be subjected to measurement limitations because the use of self-reported Likert scale questions can lead to response bias, such as central tendency bias or social desirability bias, especially on sustainability-related questions. Most importantly, as the TPB focuses on behavioral intention rather than actual behavior, the study cannot confirm whether the intentions identified translate into real second-hand clothing purchases. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as predictors of intention, not direct measures of behavior.

Additionally, the study captures consumer behavior restricted to one temporal context; therefore, it does not reflect the changing nature of sustainability-related intentions. Finally, the evolving nature of sustainable fashion trends may limit the long-term applicability of the findings. These limitations, while not undermining the value of the research, highlight opportunities for future studies.

1.8 Structure of Research

This research is organized into six chapters. Chapter One introduced the research by outlining the background, research problem, objectives, significance, and limitations of the study. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review along with the theoretical background of the research. Chapter Three details the research methodology, including the research design, data collection and measurement methods, and data analysis procedures. Chapter four presents data analysis, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and hypothesis testing. Chapters Five and Six discuss the key findings, draw conclusions, outline practical and theoretical implications, and provide recommendations for future research. This structure helps to systematically investigate the research problem by employing quantitative methods.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research. The researcher highlighted the prevalent issue of the lack of circular fashion adoption and the value-action gap, thereby introducing SHC as a sustainable alternative while acknowledging the psychological, social, and behavioral factors that may either drive or hinder consumer IASHC over fast fashion. The research is grounded in the TPB, which provides a theoretical lens for exploring how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape Gen Z's intention to consume SHC. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice, offering insights to multiple stakeholders. Finally, several limitations were acknowledged. Collectively, this chapter lays a solid foundation for the forthcoming literature review.

2 Literature and Theory

This chapter surveys the existing body of literature related to the central themes of the study: circular fashion, second-hand clothing (SHC), and sustainable consumption behavior among Gen Z. It critically evaluates the environmental consequences of fast fashion and the introduction of second-hand shopping as a sustainable alternative. The theoretical foundation of the study, the TPB, is introduced to frame the psychological, social, and behavioral factors that influence consumers' IASHC. By synthesizing prior empirical findings and drawing attention to limitations in the current body of knowledge, this chapter lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters.

2.1 The Problem: Fast Fashion and the Alternative: Secondhand Clothing

The fashion industry has long been criticized for its unsustainable practices, particularly the rise of fast fashion, which encourages overconsumption, short product life cycles, and excessive textile waste. As global concern over climate change intensifies, circular fashion has emerged as a viable alternative, offering solutions rooted in reuse, recycling, and resource efficiency. (Kim et al., 2021, p.1-4.) More recent studies underline that fast fashion's crisis is not only environmental but also social, as the industry remains strongly associated with unethical labor practices, including child labor and unsuitable working conditions across its global supply chains (Mizrachi & Tal, 2024, p.2). According to ThredUP Resale Report (2025, p. 3-6), in 2024, the global secondhand apparel market grew by 15% year-on-year, with the market expected to expand at a 10% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2024 to 2029. In the U.S., the secondhand apparel market increased by 14% in 2024, outpacing the broader retail clothing sector by nearly five times. Projections indicate it will reach $74 billion by 2029, growing at 9% CAGR during 2024–2029. Importantly for Gen Z analysis, 56% of younger consumers in 2024 reported that secondhand platforms were the first place they looked when shopping for apparel, a 7-point increase since 2022.

In the Finnish context, secondhand fashion is particularly significant: in a 2024 Statista consumer survey reported by Finland's public broadcaster Yle, 33% of Finns said they had bought second-hand clothes (in store or online) in the previous 12 months (in 2023) which accounted for the highest share among 21 countries surveyed (Peltonen, 2024). The Finnish Commerce Federation (2023) estimates Finland's circular trade market at EUR 895 million, with 60% occurring through consumer-to-consumer (C2C) e-commerce, 20% via flea markets, and 20% through second-hand/discount stores, making Finland one of the most active global resale markets. Among Finland's second-hand actors, UFF plays a central role. For example, the non-profit UFF (U-landshjälp från Folk till Folk i Finland ry, which translates to "Humana People to People in Finland") is a key driver of circular fashion. In 2024, it collected 11.9 million kilograms of clothing and resold over 2.5 million items across its 25 shops. Its operations avoided an estimated 34,445 tons of CO_2 e, with each reused garment producing less than 2% of the emissions of a new item. (UFF, 2024, p.25-29.) Such examples illustrate how circular fashion can deliver measurable sustainability outcomes, yet scaling these practices requires significant shifts in consumer behavior and industry models.

This paradigm shift from disposable trends to regenerative cycles challenges consumer habits and business models, making it both a promising and complex solution. Understanding how to enable this shift, particularly among high-consumption groups like Gen Z, is critical to fostering large-scale behavioral change in the industry. While second-hand initiatives illustrate the potential of circular fashion to cut emissions, these industry-specific efforts must also be situated within the broader sustainability and climate change debate.

2.2 Sustainability and Climate Change

Sustainability has emerged as a dominant megatrend that is transforming industries and consumer behavior worldwide. Among these, environmental megatrends such as climate change are particularly significant due to their far-reaching implications for ecosystems, industries, and daily life. (Naughtin et al, 2024, p.1-3.) Sustainability refers to the capacity of organizations and societies to maintain economic, social, and environmental balance in a manner that safeguards the prospects of future generations to fulfill their needs (Peixoto et al., 2022, p.291). A central dimension underpinning sustainability is climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global mean temperatures have already increased by 1.1°C between 2011 and 2020 compared to pre-industrial levels, with CO_2 emissions from human actions being the main contributor (Bilgili et al., 2024, p.14507-14508). Historical milestones like the 1992 Earth Summit and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol laid the groundwork for coordinated international climate action, culminating in the 2015 Paris Agreement, intended to cap the rise in average global temperature below the 2°C threshold. The consequences of climate change include ecosystem degradation, unpredictable weather, and supply chain disruptions, factors that increasingly threaten global sustainability. (Matemiloa, 2020, p.2-3; Wewerinke-Singh & Doebbler, 2016.) These challenges underscore the urgent need for integrated sustainability solutions in every industry, including fashion. In this context, enhancing resource efficiency becomes important for mitigating climate-related risks and accelerating the transition to more sustainable production systems.

Resource efficiency is a key pillar of sustainable development, focusing on optimizing material and energy use to reduce environmental harm (Peixoto et al., 2022). According to Black et al. (2021), industrial growth neglected these impacts, resulting in overconsumption of finite resources. Events like the 1973 oil crisis highlighted resource scarcity and spurred more sustainable practices (Kosik, 2015). Today, circular economy principles such as reuse, recycling, and waste minimization have become central, especially through initiatives like the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan (Păcurariu et al., 2021, p.2). These approaches align with global goals like UN SDG 12, promoting responsible consumption and production (Wennersten & Sun, 2017). In this light, climate change, circularity, and sustainability are intertwined, requiring systemic innovation to decouple fashion´s growth from environmental degradation.

2.2.1 Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact

Fashion is a form of expression that is considered acceptable or trendy among a large group of people spanning over a specific time, and impulsive purchases, shorter product life cycles, and volatile market demand characterize such fashionable expressions. Fast fashion, a dominant force in the global fashion industry, refers to the production and distribution of affordable clothing on a mass scale, aligning with rapidly changing fashion trends at breakneck speed. Hence, fast fashion prioritizes large volume and lower costs over sustainability. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p. 169.) As per Liu et al. (2021, p. 228), typically, fast fashion brands and retailers convert runway designs into consumer-ready products within two to three weeks, resulting in approximately twenty-four collections annually. “Retailers such as Zara, H&M, Mango, New Look, and Top Shop were adopting such designs rapidly to attract consumers and introduce interpretations of the runway designs to the stores in a minimum of three to five weeks.” (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p. 169).

The fast fashion industry is characterized by rapidly shifting trends and extremely short product life cycles, where fast fashion buyers constantly buy in recurring patterns instilled by a sense of urgency when purchasing. The growing consumer demand for trend-driven apparel places significant pressure on the fashion industry, resulting in garments being discarded shortly after purchase, straight from the wardrobe to the dump, and contributing to accelerated textile waste. (Martínez-Ruiz et al., 2025, adapted from Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025, p.2.) Therefore, fast fashion is considered a waste because consumers repeatedly buy large volumes of poor-quality garments that are soon discarded rather than investing in durable, high-quality alternatives (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p. 169).

The environmental cost of fast fashion is profound. As per Fang (2023, p.167), the fashion industry is one of the most environmentally damaging industries, and fast fashion accelerates this impact through rapid production cycles and a disposable clothing culture. For example, producing a kilogram of cotton requires 20,000 liters of water, and chemicals and microfiber particles of polyester used in fashionable clothing are discarded into waterways. "Annually, the average American discards about 80 pounds of clothing and textiles, constituting roughly 5% of the total capacity of all landfills" (Fang, 2023, 168). Also, the fast fashion industry is responsible for global warming due to its high emissions of carbon dioxide (Liu et al., 2021, p. 229). "In 2015, polyester textiles generated 1.5 trillion pounds of greenhouse gases" (Fang, 2023, 168). Within the Finland context, there is sufficient evidence to support the argument of the environmental impact of fast fashion. About 85 million kg of textiles reached end-of-life in 2019. Of this, 60% was incinerated as mixed waste, showing a massive loss of resources and clear evidence of unsustainability. Further, only 9,900 tonnes of household textiles were reused in 2019, about 1.8 kg per person, far below the 11.3 kg consumed. This imbalance illustrates the short lifespan of fast fashion garments in Finland. (Team Finland, 2019.)

The fast fashion model's inherent tendency toward overproduction and overconsumption thus results in massive quantities of textile waste being dumped, burned, or left to pollute natural environments. Given the unsustainable trajectory of fast fashion, the concept of circular fashion has gained traction as a systemic solution that could address the environmental and social burdens of fast fashion.

2.2.2 Circular Fashion

The fashion industry´s prevailing linear model of production, consumption, and disposal has caused rapid depletion of Earth´s resources and significant negative externalities (Priyadharshini et al., 2024, p. 2577). In reaction to this, the integration of circular economy practices within fashion has become more evident. Hence, efforts have been taken to extend the life cycle of garments via the recycling of used clothing and the establishment of new business models such as second-hand markets (Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025, p.6). The circular economy model offers a restorative alternative by prioritizing reuse and recycling. Empirical evidence supports the environmental benefits of this approach: for example, "Reusing 100 cotton t-shirts reduces the global warming burden by 14%, while using 65/35 polyester/cotton pants reduces the global warming burden by 23%" (Fang, 2023, p. 169). Further, Evidence suggests that lengthening the duration of clothing use by nine months could lessen carbon output and water-related waste by between 20 and 30 percent (Hur, 2020, p.3).

“The term ‘circular fashion’ is a relatively new concept that combines circular economy and sustainable fashion concepts” (Kim, 2021, p.2). Hence, as per Kim (2021), in this view, circular fashion represents a regenerative system in which garments, shoes, or accessories are produced and circulated responsibly, ensuring they are reused and returned to the environment in a non-harmful manner after their useful life (p.2). Circular fashion can be categorized into three as secondhand clothing, upcycled clothing, and recycled clothing (refer to Figures 1,2, and 3 for the visual representation of these three types of circular clothing). Secondhand fashion involves the resale of pre-owned garments in their original state. Upcycled fashion refers to creatively transforming discarded materials into high valued products or products that perform better. Recycled fashion entails the breakdown of used textiles into raw materials for the creation of new products as shown in Figure 3 (Kim et al., 2021, p.3.) Accordingly, circular fashion involves clothing systems based on regenerative designs and circular fashion extends beyond simple recycling and incorporates practices such as resale, rental, upcycling, and repair, thus creating a closed-loop system that reduces textile waste (Priyadharshini et al., 2024, p. 2575).

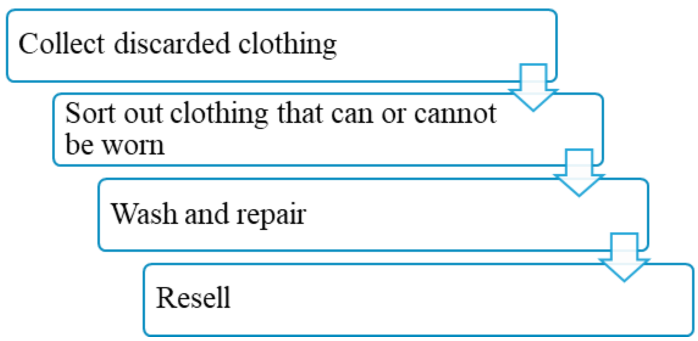

Figure 1. Process of Secondhand Clothing (Author´s Compilation, Adapted from Kim et al., 2021, P.19)

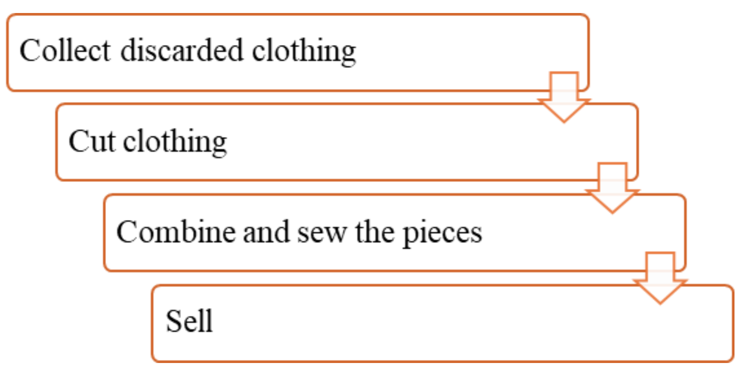

Figure 2. Process of Upcycled Clothing (Author´s Compilation, Adapted from Kim et al., 2021, P.20)

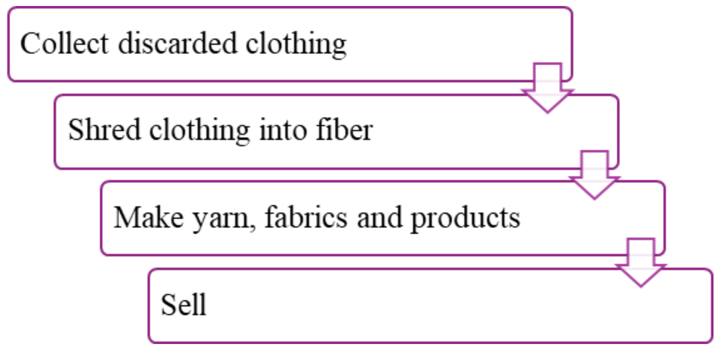

Figure 3. Process of Recycled Clothing (Author´s Compilation, Adapted from Kim et al., 2021, P.21)

One of the most prominent approaches to circular fashion is the reselling of clothes, which can be implemented through five key business models. The first category is third-party resellers, which receive used items from third parties, refurbish them, and sell (e.g., Shelter, Oxfam). The second category refers to the peer-to-peer model, which connects buyers and sellers to buy and sell used items (e.g., Verstiaire Collective, eBay, Depop, and Vinted). Third is take-back schemes where original fashion brands or retailers allow consumers to buy used items instead of new purchases for resale (e.g., Zara pre-owned, John Lewis, and Fashion Cycle). The fourth category is on-demand rental models that rent items to consumers based on their demand (e.g., HURR, My Wardrobe, By Rotation, Rent the Runway), while the fifth category refers to subscription-based rental models, which provide temporary ownership of the product, offering recurring access to rotating wardrobes for a monthly fee (e.g., Nuuly and Vivrelle) (PWC, 2024, p.11.) According to Gurova (2024, p.299), renting clothes is not popular. However, buying from second-hand stores and flea markets is popular.

Across the different forms that circular fashion can take, such as secondhand clothing, upcycled clothing, and recycled clothing, the present study narrows its focus to one of the most accessible and widely adopted models: second-hand fashion. Unlike rental or subscription services, which are frequently hindered by issues such as limited availability, hygiene concerns, or logistical complexity, second-hand fashion has established a stronger foothold through physical thrift stores and increasingly through digital resale platforms. This choice is particularly relevant given emerging evidence that, among the various circular approaches, second-hand shopping is the most popular and socially accepted among Gen Z consumers. (Gurova, 2024, p.303.) Recent evidence highlights that consumers are motivated to buy secondhand apparel for a combination of economic, experiential, and ethical reasons. The top drivers include securing better deals, enjoying the thrill of the hunt, and accessing higher-end brands at affordable prices. In addition to financial and experiential value, consumers also cite environmental concerns and the appeal of unique, one-of-a-kind fashion items as key motivations. (ThredUp Resale Report, 2025, p.6.) Therefore, to better understand the drivers of circular fashion adoption, this study centers on second-hand consumption as a representative practice through which Gen Z consumers engage with circularity in the Finnish context.

However, the successful implementation of circular fashion ultimately depends on consumer acceptance and behavioral change. Therefore, it is critical to explore how young consumers, particularly Gen Z, perceive and respond to circular fashion initiatives, as their attitudes and behaviors will play a central role in driving the transition toward sustainability in the fashion industry.

2.3 Gen Z and Fashion Consumption Behavior

According to Gurova (2024, p.290), Gen Z are also called as ‘GenZers’, ´digital natives´, ´post-millennials´ or ‘Zoomers’. It is the generation after millennials and before the Alpha generation. They are more educated, eco-conscious, entrepreneurial, thriftier, more interested in access rather than ownership, value alignment over brand loyalty, and actively engage in sustainable practices via social platforms. Therefore, they prefer sharing over ownership, which is therefore the ideal group to target for circular fashion. The most frequent consumers of fast fashion are consumers between the ages of 15 and 29 years (Williams & Hodges, 2020, p. 1). Within the Finland context, Gen Z consumers within the age of 20-29 amount to 12% of the population in 2024 (Hipp & Boer, 2025).

For Gen Z, the most pressing concerns include climate change, inequality in income, and poverty, with a strong expectation that businesses should contribute to resolving these social and environmental challenges (Chaturvedi et al., 2020; Williams & Hodges, 2020, adapted from Gurova, 2024, p.291). Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, also known as the green generation, is seen as a driver of sustainability, yet their behavior often reflects inconsistency between values and actions. Although Gen Z has a clear affinity for circular fashion, they do not always rely on eco-friendly buying decisions, and that is mostly due to a lack of information about circular fashion and also perceiving circular fashion as expensive. (Prits, 2023.)

Lately, with increased awareness of the negative impact of the global fashion industry, one-third of the consumers have incorporated values and beliefs of sustainability and have resorted to responsible consumption as a means of expressing their beliefs on sustainability (Escourido-Calvo et al., 2025, p.1). Consumer buying behavior of fashion items is subject to change due to increasing consumer awareness, increasing consumer income, and exposure to social media and trends (Kim et al., 2021, p.1-4). Considering actual fashion consumption behavior, based on interviews with ten Gen Z consumers in the southeastern U.S, according to Williams and Hodges (2020) consumers are already acquiring clothes via exchange, rentals, and second-hand shopping, either by visiting physical second-hand stores or via online platforms such as Instagram and they are mostly driven by cheaper and interesting fashion options, not necessarily due to sustainability concerns. Furthermore, even though consumers are not fully aware of sustainability, because they feel like not wasting clothes, they prefer to donate them to mostly thrift shops or upcycle them (p. 2).

With regard to the value action gap, consumer purchasing decisions are not always rational and they are not always in line with their values. Therefore, even though consumers know the benefits of circular fashion they may still prefer fast fashion. (Evanilay, 2022, p. 269.) As per a study conducted by Escourido-Calvo et al (2025, p. 13), out of 131 students or recent graduates from the fashion and textile field in Galicia, Spain, 73% consume fast fashion and only 2.1% consume second-hand fashion. In the Finnish context, even though Finnish consumers express strong awareness of environmental and social issues, there remains a noteworthy gap between awareness and intention to buy SHC. In fact, although most respondents had positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion, over half stated that environmental and ethical factors did not influence their purchases of clothing. (Federiko, 2022, p. 28–29.)

This underlines the need for more targeted strategies to transition consumer behavior toward sustainable fashion systems. For that, understanding what factors and the impact of those factors that influence Gen Z consumers towards adopting circular fashion needs to be explored.

The literature reviewed so far highlights how Gen Z's fashion behavior is influenced by diverse psychological, social, and practical factors. However, to systematically understand how these factors shape behavioral intentions, a theoretical foundation is required. Therefore, before examining the specific determinants of IASHC, this study introduces the TPB as the guiding framework in the next section.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991)

TPB is used in identifying the Independent variables (IVs) that impact the Dependent variable (DV) of the IASHC instead of fast fashion. According to Kotyza, et al. (2024, p.3), while several behavioral theories have been applied to explain adoption and intention, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Ajzen & Fishbein (1980), the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory by Stern et al. (1999), and the Norm Activation Model (NAM) by Schwartz (1977), they pose several limitations in the context of this research. The TRA focuses on attitudes and subjective norms but excludes perceived behavioral control, which is crucial for understanding what factors facilitate and hinder consumer intention in sustainable fashion consumption. Moreover, VBN and NAM are also less ideal for market-based fashion contexts, and they are less predictive for hedonic or social-consumption contexts like fashion. In contrast, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) integrates both motivational and control components, making it a more comprehensive model for predicting intention-based consumption behaviors.

Recent research has extended TPB into sustainability contexts, making it a suitable framework for this study. For instance, Müller et al. (2021) enhanced the TPB framework by integrating ecological conscience and moral obligation to better explain green purchasing intentions, showing that environmental values can improve the robustness of the model's predictive capability. Similarly, Nejad et al. (2024) applied an extended TPB to examine consumption reduction, highlighting how sustainability-related behaviors can be captured within its structure. These studies illustrate that TPB is both adaptable and robust, making it an appropriate foundation for analyzing Gen Z's adoption of second-hand fashion. As per Ajzen (1991), TPB is one of the most widely used psychological models applied in understanding consumer behavior. It posits that intention is the immediate antecedent of behavior, and such intention is driven by attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral controls. Figure 4 (Author's compilation) illustrates this. The interplay of these constructs affects the chances of an individual engaging in the intended behavior. This is a fundamental theory in helping to understand the value-action gap. Hence, it is evident that given the rise of climate consciousness, digital influence, and evolving identity expression among younger consumers, TPB offers a robust framework to capture the complexity of fashion-related decision-making. Most studies regarding sustainable consumer behavior and consumption patterns of Gen Z have adopted the TPB by Icek Ajzen (Gurova, 2024, p. 292).

"Attitude toward the behavior refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). When consumers have favorable attitudes towards second-hand shopping, their intention to purchase will increase; otherwise not. According to the expectancy-value model, this attitude is formed through behavioral beliefs that link the behavior to desirable outcomes, such as functional value and identity with the outcome. (Ajzen, 1991.) Hence, as attitudinal-based IVs, Perceived Functional Value (PFV) and Emotional and Identity Alignment (EIA) with sustainable fashion were taken into consideration. As per Esfandiar and Hadinejad (2024), while TPB is effective for predicting intention-based behavior, it has been critiqued for insufficiently capturing emotional or value-driven factors. It is also argued that the TPB often treats emotions/values as secondary or tacked-on, rather than as central drivers. To address these critiques, this study incorporates identity alignment as an additional construct to capture emotional and value-driven dimensions of fashion choice. Hence, based on attitudes, the IVs of PFV and EIA were considered.

Subjective norm “refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Among Gen Z, these norms are often shaped by peers, family, and especially digital influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. When individuals believe that important social referents approve of circular fashion or if it is viewed as trendy or socially rewarding, their intention to adopt the behavior strengthens. (Williams & Hodges, 2020.) Thus, subjective norms are a powerful driver of behavioral changes in fashion contexts, especially when sustainability becomes a socially endorsed lifestyle. Hence, based on subjective norms, the IVs of Social Media and Influencer Impact (SMI) and Fear of Social Criticism (FSC) were considered.

The final variables of Perceived Access and Convenience (PAC) and Perceived Financial Feasibility (PFF) were based on Ajzen’s conceptualization of perceived behavioral control as “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991, 188). This component is underpinned by factors that facilitate or hinder performance, such as price, time, or availability. As per Mobarak et al. (2025, p. 3), in fashion, perceived barriers such as lack of access to second-hand stores, limited sizing, and hygiene concerns can reduce behavioral control and deter adoption, even when attitudes are positive. Conversely, when consumers perceive circular options as accessible and manageable, they are better positioned to follow through with their intended actions. Therefore, examining these control factors is essential to understanding whether Gen Z consumers can realistically shift their purchase behavior, despite having sustainable intentions.

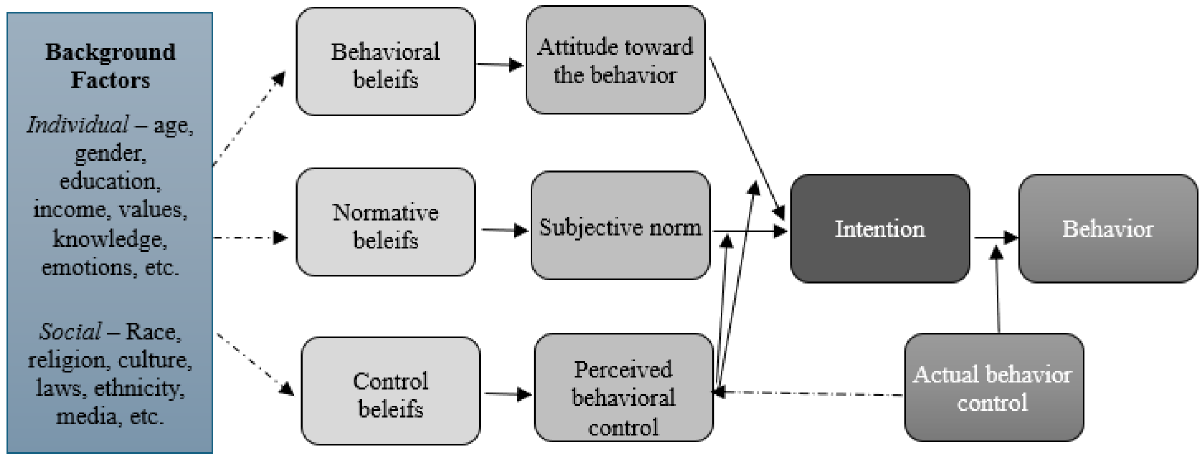

Figure 4. TPB Diagram (Author´s Compilation, Adapted from Ajzen 2019)

This model illustrates how attitudinal, normative, and control beliefs influence intention and behavior, guiding the development of the study's IVs. Ajzen (2019) also emphasizes the influence of background factors such as age, cultural norms, media exposure, and values, which indirectly shape the belief structures that lead to intention and behavior. These are relevant for the target group of the research, as Gen Z is heavily influenced by social trends, digital media, and environmental awareness. By incorporating such context-specific influences, the framework is adapted to more accurately reflect the behavioral drivers.

To ensure scientific rigor of the study, the six key constructs of PFV, EIA, SMI, FSC, PAC, and PFF, were organized under the three core components of Ajzen's (1991) TPB framework: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This categorization is not arbitrary but grounded in the TPB framework, where Ajzen defines that intentions to perform behaviors can be predicted from attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In alignment with this framework, constructs such as PFV and EIA reflect attitudinal appraisals of second-hand fashion, while SMI and FSC map onto the social pressures and perceived normative expectations underpinning subjective norms. Meanwhile, PAC and PFF relate directly to consumers' perceived behavioral control, reflecting their assessment of the feasibility and ease of adopting second-hand fashion.

In alignment with this, Koay et al. (2024) directly operationalized TPB by mapping functional value and hedonic value as attitudinal components, normative influence as a proxy for subjective norms, and accessibility and affordability under perceived behavioral control. Koay et al. (2024) employed a combination of PLS-SEM and Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) to distinguish between must-have and should-have conditions in encouraging SHC purchases. Their findings showed that functional value is a must-have; a necessary precondition without which consumers are unlikely to engage in second-hand shopping. Meanwhile, emotional value, social value, and epistemic value were classified as should-haves; important but not essential. This distinction is particularly relevant to studies grounded in the TPB, as it highlights that certain attitudes (e.g., perceived practicality and quality) are not just influential but critical to trigger Gen Z's behavioral shift from fast fashion to circular fashion.

Similarly, Mobarak et al. (2025) emphasized that "price, accessibility, and availability are major perceived facilitators" of sustainable fashion behavior, aligning with the perceived behavioral control construct. Subjective norms are further supported through evidence that "influencers can drive behavioral intentions through perceived social acceptability and peer reinforcement" (Ge, 2023). Therefore, this structured categorization is not only grounded in TPB theory but is also methodologically validated in contemporary empirical research. To ensure theoretical clarity and to maintain consistency between the research questions, theoretical constructs, and data collection strategy, an operationalization table is included in Appendix 1.

While the TPB provides the theoretical foundation for understanding behavioral intentions, its application must be supported by empirical insights into how consumers actually perceive and engage with SHC. Therefore, the subsequent section synthesizes prior empirical studies to illustrate how those drivers influence SHC adoption, integrating the theoretical constructs with observed consumer behavior patterns.

2.5 Secondhand Clothing Consumption and Its Influencing Factors

While the environmental harm of fast fashion is well-documented and circular fashion offers viable alternatives, the adoption of SHC is neither automatic nor uniform. The role of consumers is fundamental in shaping the integration of circular practices into their fashion choices, yet this adoption is hindered due to persistent gaps between values and actual behavior, and there is a lack of interest among consumers to shift to circular fashion because of their greater desire to be fashionable over ethicality. (Priyadharshani et al., 2024; Gurova, 2024, p. 290.) This indicates that many consumers are not fully replacing fast fashion but rather experimenting with or selectively adopting secondhand options alongside conventional purchases.

“Sustainability alone is not enough to bring about the necessary adjustments in consumers' clothing purchases because of three reasons: first, sustainable fashion is too demanding, customers' ethical concerns are too diverse, and clothing is not an altruistic purchase” (Zhang et al., 2021, adapted from Evanilay, 2022, p.269). These barriers reflect broader challenges in motivating pro-environmental behavior, particularly when fashion identity, convenience, or affordability are at stake.

To better understand consumer choices in this domain, scholars have turned to value-based frameworks. In consumer behavior research, Sheth et al.’s framework is frequently referenced, outlining five principal consumption values that shape product choice: functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic (Kim et al., 2021, p. 4). These dimensions are directly relevant to SHC consumption. For instance, functional value is reflected in Gen Z’s search for affordable yet durable garments, while emotional value captures the enjoyment of thrifting and the uniqueness of pre-owned items. Social value plays a role when fashion choices are shaped by peers or influencers, and conditional value becomes important during financial constraints when low-cost alternatives are needed. Finally, epistemic value relates to the curiosity and novelty of experimenting with vintage or previously owned clothing. These value dimensions also provide a multidimensional lens through which to assess why some Gen Z consumers may desire to buy more of circular fashion while others remain loyal to fast fashion. Thus, bridging the intention-action gap requires addressing not only environmental motivations but also the perceived emotional, social, and functional benefits of circular alternatives.

2.5.1 Attitudes towards Secondhand Clothing

Attitudes represent a person's holistic evaluation of performing a specific act and attitudes play a central role in determining behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). The researcher aims to identify the impact of **PFV** (belief that circular fashion is practical, high-quality, durable, and useful) and **EIA** (extent to which circular fashion reflects Gen Z's personal values, image, or identity) on the IASHC among Gen Z consumers in Finland. Gen Z's attitudes are particularly important, as they are anticipated to account for over 45% of global fashion purchases by 2025 (Lappi, 2021, p.12). Given their high consumption rate, understanding how they perceive the value of secondhand clothing is essential for encouraging behavioral change.

Perceived Functional Value

The functional attributes of fashion, including considerations such as comfort, quality, and purpose that help satisfy core physiological needs, are often prioritized by Gen Z consumers over emotional fulfillment. Accordingly, the functional value of fashion is of utmost importance as consumers perceive good quality at a reasonable price. (Evanilay, 2022, p. 270.) Consumers expect sustainable fashion also to be stylish and of high quality, or else consumers are reluctant to buy (Lappi, 2021, p.38). According to Gurova (2024, p. 298), consumers buy second-hand clothes to save money, find unique styles, and they value durability and flexibility in their choices. Second-hand clothes "have more character" or that they "like the story behind the clothes." Similarly, studies note that second-hand retailers often invest in cleaning and repairing items to reassure consumers of quality. Thus, every time a costume is rented by a consumer, the consumer will receive a high-quality outfit that will meet or exceed their needs. (Herjanto, 2023, p.4). These practical aspects are critical to circular fashion, where long-lasting, high-quality, and multi-use garments can serve as motivators for increasing SHC consumption.

However, concerns about functional risk remain. “Functional risk refers to the possibility that the purchased product will not work well, the service will not be performed properly, or the desired function will fail” (Kim et al., 2021, p. 6). Specifically, consumers may worry that circular garments will not meet utilitarian expectations such as durability, sturdiness, or ease of use (Kim et al., 2021, p. 6). These concerns can negatively impact attitudes toward secondhand clothing unless retailers can clearly communicate quality assurance.

Overall, when Gen Z consumers perceive SHC as high-quality, practical, and reliable, their attitudes become more favorable, which strengthens their intention to adopt such clothing.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H1: PFV has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

Emotional and Identity Alignment

EIA refers to how well circular fashion reflects a consumer's personal values, emotional state, and self-image. “Emotional value indicates the perception of value and the emotional state that consumers feel when they shop or wear products” (Kim et al., 2021, p. 5), and prior research highlights that such positive emotions are pronounced in circular fashion, where shoppers often experience the greatest sense of pleasure and fulfilment from their purchases (Kim et al., 2021, p. 16). “Among younger people, fashion is a form of personality expression, a sign of belonging to a social group, a status symbol, and even a means of self-fulfilment.” (Martínez-Ruiz et al., 2025, adapted from Escourido-Calvo, et al., 2025, p.1). Richardson, et al. (2022), also argue that clothing is a part of a consumer´s image and sense of belongingness, and consumers focus on how they are identified (p.7). According to Kim et al. (2021), Consumers feel stress relieved and self-satisfied when they buy circular fashion, as they feel that they have contributed to environmental protection. Further, it is expected that positive attitudes towards circular fashion will be significantly influenced by the emotional value associated with circular fashion (p.5).

Fashion trends are linked to the aesthetic and structural aspects of clothing; these trends are rapidly exchanged globally due to social media and mass communication, making fashion a lifestyle construct influenced by culture, economics, and social identity. For Gen Z, consumer fashion is a sense of self-expression and identity. Most youngsters prefer to follow changing fashion styles, and these trend-following behaviors often conflict with sustainable consumption practices, creating tension between personal image and environmental responsibility. (Evanilay, 2022, p.270) Therefore, encouraging Gen Z to adopt circular fashion requires positioning it not only as environmentally responsible but also as a credible source for self-expression and status, offering identity value that equals or exceeds that of fast fashion.

Therefore, when SHC aligns with Gen Z's sense of style, individuality, and emotional satisfaction, it can enhance their positive attitude and strengthen their IASHC.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H2: EIA has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

2.5.2 Subjective norms and Secondhand Clothing

Subjective norms indicate the extent to which people feel pressured by society to engage in or avoid a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of second-hand fashion, two dimensions are particularly relevant for Gen Z: **SMI** (external visibility and trend-driven influence) and **FSC** (fear of being criticized or rejected by a value-based group). Despite increased awareness and societal trends of sustainability as a lifestyle choice, consumers of Gen Z still purchase fast fashion because of their desire for new products (Prits, 2023, p.23). This highlights the cruciality of social influence as a powerful determinant of consumption behavior.

Social Media and Influencer Impact

"Social value is the perceived utility associated with a particular social group, or the apparent utility that results from the association between the service or product and positively or negatively stereotyped demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural-ethnic groups" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 5). Since Gen Z consumers are digital natives, their fashion choices are often influenced by fashion influencers, social networks, and e-commerce platforms (Escourido-Calvo, et al., 2025, P.7). "..they prefer to interact with and be influenced by famous people such as celebrities or opinion leaders (KOLs). Peer groups have a significant influence on them, emphasizing the social value of fashion” (Prits, 2023, p. 23). Thus, for circular fashion to compete with fast fashion, it must also be framed as innovative and style-driven to resonate with Gen Z’s aesthetic preferences. According to a study conducted by Evanilay (2022), it was found that fashion trends significantly contribute to positive norms towards buying fast fashion. Therefore, it implies that if circular fashion could be made trendy, it would be very easy to increase the number of consumers purchasing secondhand clothing.

According to Williams and Hodges (2020, adapted from Gurova, 2024), social media platforms such as Instagram support second-hand fashion consumption by fostering familiarity and trust between buyers and sellers, thereby reducing hesitancy toward purchasing used clothing (p.292). This indicates that social platforms can mitigate fears of risk or social disapproval, thereby lowering barriers to participation in adopting secondhand clothing.

Therefore, when fashion influencers and social media portray SHC as trendy, aspirational, and socially valued, they can reshape Gen Z’s perceptions and strengthen their IASHC.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H3: SMI has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

Fear of Social Criticism

Evanilay (2022, p. 272) found that environmental awareness had no significant negative impact on intention to purchase fast fashion. Despite being a widely accepted predictor of green behavior, its effect was minimal (−5.3%), highlighting the value–action gap - awareness alone does not translate into reduced fast fashion consumption. Even though fashion is strongly associated with self-expression, identity, pleasure, and invigorating youngsters, fashion is strongly criticized due to its environmental and social harm, leading to much social criticism of fast fashion in contemporary northern European countries like Finland. Therefore, youngsters are often entangled in a love-hate relationship with fashion; desiring trend participation while feeling guilt over its environmental consequences. (Gurova, 2024, p.290.) This ambivalence is reinforced by reputational concerns. Research shows that reputational concerns and social visibility shape pro-environmental choices: when decisions are public, people shift toward "green" options to maintain status and avoid negative judgment (Griskevicius et al, 2010, p.396). Furthermore, beyond visibility, anticipated social emotions, especially emotions like guilt, shame, or embarrassment, reliably predict pro-environmental intentions and behaviors (Shipley & Riper, 2022).

In the SHC domain specifically, empirical studies report social-acceptance and social-image concerns, including social/psychological risk as salient factors that can deter or enable SHC adoption, implying that where positive social judgment is expected, second-hand uptake increases (Gilal, et al., 2024). Therefore, when individuals anticipate being judged or looked down upon for buying fast fashion, the fear of social criticism can motivate them to shift toward SHC as a way to protect their reputation and demonstrate eco-consciousness. Conversely, if second-hand fashion itself is associated with perceptions of low status, this lack of positive social value diminishes its appeal. In this way, social judgment acts as both a barrier and a motivator: avoiding fast fashion becomes a way to signal environmental responsibility and social belonging.

Overall, when Gen Z consumers perceive that purchasing fast fashion may attract social disapproval, while SHC enhances their social image and environmental reputation, they are more likely to shift their preferences toward circular fashion.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H4: FSC has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

2.5.3 Perceived Behavioral Control and Secondhand Clothing

The final construct examined under the TPB is perceived behavioral control, which refers to the individual's perception of the ease or difficulty in performing a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The researcher aims to identify the impact of **PAC** (the belief that circular fashion is easy to find, buy, or easy to interact with) and **PFF** (whether circular fashion is affordable or competitive) towards SHC among Gen Z consumers in Finland. These factors are particularly relevant for

Gen Z consumers in Finland, where behavioral intention may not translate into action unless practical constraints are minimized.

Perceived Access and Convenience

Access to circular fashion is a critical factor in determining consumer adoption. According to Williams and Hodges (2020), based on an interview with 10 Gen Z consumers in the southeastern U.S, they were willing to be more responsible when purchasing and discarding clothes, but it was challenging due to limited availability and lack of transparent communication between consumers and apparel retailers and producers. Similarly, Evanilay (2022, p.269), found that the extent to which circular fashion is available and easily accessible determines the demand for circular fashion. Inaccessible store locations, inconsistent stock, or a lack of user-friendly digital platforms can undermine even the most well-intentioned consumers. Thus, for circular fashion to become a mainstream choice, it must be made visible, convenient, and well-integrated into consumers' daily shopping routines.

When circular fashion options are easily accessible and convenient to purchase, Gen Z consumers are more likely to act on their sustainable intentions and adopt SHC.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H5: PAC has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

Perceived Financial Feasibility

Affordability remains a key determinant in sustainable fashion behavior. Most fashion item resales are considered costly due to higher labor costs across resale models, ranging from £1 per item in charity shops to as high as c.£20 per item on premium resale platforms. These barriers mostly make secondhand purchases more costly than fast fashion items. (PwC, 2024, p.15.) According to Herjanto et al. (2023), Young consumers with low disposable income often tend to shop at thrift shops at affordable prices because they can get designer items and fashionable styles at lower prices than from firsthand shops (p. 15). This reflects a dual perception while some resale platforms are costly, others offer circular fashion as a budget-conscious alternative.

"This consumer prioritizes low cost, as their budget does not allow them to pay for more ethical options. The price variable overrides their sensitivity to sustainability, presenting a clear contrast between environmental concerns and actual purchasing decisions." (Escourido-Calvo, et al., 2025, p.7). Therefore, unless circular fashion is perceived as both accessible and feasible, Gen Z's intention to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns may remain unrealized.

When Gen Z consumers perceive SHC as affordable compared to fast fashion, they are more likely to form positive intentions toward its adoption.
Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H6: PFF has a positive relationship with the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

Understanding these constraints is essential to identifying the behavioral intentions of Gen Z consumers in Finland.

2.6 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the TPB and prior literature, the conceptual framework illustrates how attitudinal (PFV, EIA), social (SMI, FSC), and behavioral control (PAC, PFF) factors influence Gen Z's IASHC. The conceptual framework of the research is given in Figure 5, and the hypotheses are given in Table 1.

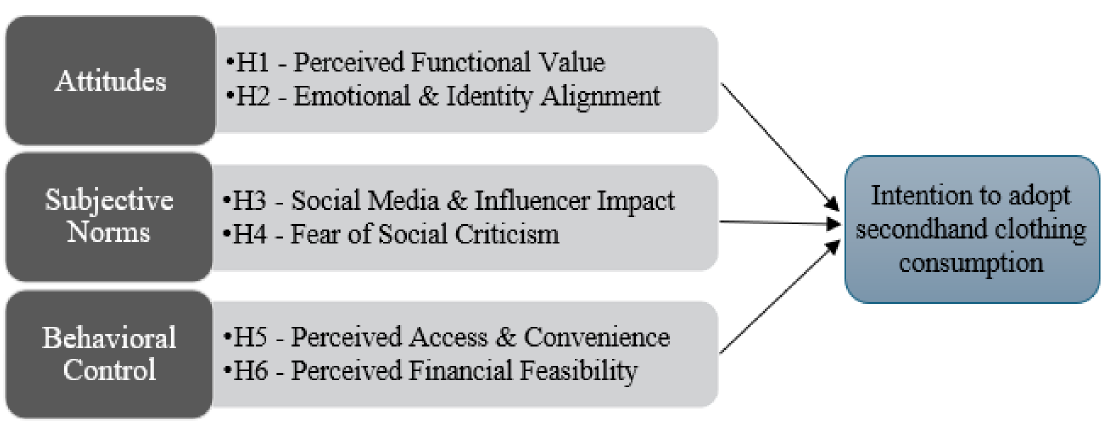

Figure 5. Conceptual Framework of the Research (Author´s Compilation)

Table 1. Research Hypotheses (Authors´ Compilation)

Hypotheses	Expected Result
H10 - PFV has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H1a - PFV has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis
H20 - EIA has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H2a - EIA has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis
H30 - SMI has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H3a - SMI has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis
H40 - FSC has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H4a - FSC has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis
H50 - PAC has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H5a - PAC has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis
H60 - PFF has no significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC. H6a - PFF has a significant effect on Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.	Reject the null hypothesis

Note: Expected results are based on theoretical assumptions derived from literature.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This study establishes the conceptual framework for investigating what factors impact the IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers, while explaining SHC intention through the TPB. With the increasing environmental and social impact of fast fashion, SHC emerges as a sustainable alternative. Accordingly, the researcher operationalizes six constructs within TPB: Attitudes (Perceived Functional Value, Emotional & Identity Alignment), Subjective Norms (Social Media/Influencer impact, Fear of Social Criticism), and Perceived Behavioral Control (Perceived Accessibility/Convenience, Perceived Financial Feasibility). The review synthesizes evidence that SHC uptake increases when it delivers quality and value, aligns with self-expression, is normatively visible and reputationally safe, and is easy and affordable to implement; conversely, functional risk, stigma, limited access, and cost constraints hinder adoption. This synthesis establishes a clear rationale for the study's framework and hypotheses, enabling a structured, theory-driven analysis of Finnish Gen Z's IASHC.

3 Methodology

This section aims to demonstrate how the research was conducted to establish scientific rigor and show that the findings are based on a clear and systematic approach. Accordingly, this section provides information about research design, tools, data collection, and analysis procedures to ensure the study is replicable, valid, and reliable.

3.1 Research Design, Research Philosophy, and Approach

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), research design refers to the overall plan or blueprint of the research. Hence, it outlines the systematic process by which the data will be gathered and analyzed to answer the research questions. Research designs are typically divided into exploratory and conclusive; this study employed a conclusive research design, as the study substantiated hypotheses to arrive at definitive conclusions based on empirical data. Further, conclusive research design is of two types, as descriptive and causal, while this research was based on a descriptive conclusive study, as the study described characteristics, trends, or distributions, focused on relationships, not cause and effect relationships, and used self-reported data without manipulating the variables. This is consistent with prior research. For example, Koay et al. (2024) used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to test hypothesized relationships in a study on Gen Z's sustainable fashion behavior. Similarly, Mobarak et al. (2025, p.7-9) described their work as a descriptive study using a self-administered questionnaire to explore patterns and relationships in the data rather than test causality.

Research philosophy is: "Any scientific inquiry is based on a particular paradigm, which can be defined as a world view or a set of linked assumptions about the world" (Slevitch, 2011, p.74). Research philosophy consists of three major components: ontology refers to the nature of reality, epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge, and axiology refers to the role of values. Out of the main types of ontological perspectives: realism (reality exists independently of human perceptions, it is objective and can be measured) and relativism (reality is subjective and constructed by individuals; different people have different realities), this study adopted realism as the study is separated from the researcher´s subjectivity. Hence, the researcher assumed that consumer behavior and attitudes exist as observable realities that can be objectively measured, independent of the researcher's personal views. Out of the main categories of epistemology: positivism (knowledge is based on observable, empirical facts. Research should be objective and measurable), interpretivism (knowledge is socially constructed; truth is context-dependent), and pragmatism (knowledge is judged by what works in practice; both objective and subjective knowledge matter), this study was based on positivism since the researcher gathered quantitative data via structured surveys and used statistical tools to explain behavior. Moreover, the main types of axiology philosophy are objectivism (research should be value-free; the researcher remains neutral) and subjectivism (the researcher's values, experiences, and perspectives influence the research). This study adopted objectivism as its research philosophy, with the researcher maintaining neutrality and avoiding interference, which aligns with the goal of producing unbiased insights into consumer behavior. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Slevitch, 2011.)

Research approach refers to the structure of how the study moves from theory to data or from data to theory. The three main types are deductive (starts with a well-established theory or conceptual framework and tests it through hypothesis-driven research), inductive (builds theory from data; It moves from specific observations to broader generalizations), and abductive approaches (a combination of inductive and deductive logic). Accordingly, the researcher adopted a deductive approach as the study commenced by applying the TPB and empirically testing pre-defined hypotheses from general to specific approach. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016.)

3.2 Research Choice, Strategy, Time Horizon, and Setting

Research choice refers to the decision between using a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach. This study was a quantitative research as it focused on numerical data, statistical analysis, and objective measurement to examine relationships between variables. Research strategy refers to the tools, methods, and settings you will use to collect and analyze data, such as surveys. “A survey is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior” (Fink, 2003, adapted from Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.97). This research adopted a survey strategy as the study aimed to test hypotheses by collecting data from a large group, as it is the most popular strategy used to collect data regarding consumer decision-making. (Kittur, 2023; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016.)

Considering the time horizon, this research was based on a cross-sectional study as data were collected at a specific point in time from Finnish Gen Z consumers and were not repeated. This approach was appropriate since the aim was to capture behavioral intentions toward SHC rather than track changes over time, making a longitudinal design unnecessary. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a non-contrived setting, which means the study was conducted in non-artificial setting without the researcher´s involvement and the absence of control variables. (Saunders et al., 2007; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016.)

3.3 Population and Sampling

“The population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. It is the group of people, events, or things of interest for which the researcher wants to make inferences” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.236). Accordingly, the population of the research was residents in Finland aged 18–28 who regularly or occasionally shop from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara). However, due to the impossibility of collecting data from the entire population within given time and resource constraints, a subset of the population was selected via sampling. “The process of selecting the right individuals, objects, or events as representatives for the entire population is known as sampling” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.235). The sample of the study was therefore a hundred respondents from the population. Although sampling may limit representativeness, the sample of one hundred respondents aligns with the acceptable range proposed by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), who note that samples between thirty and five hundred are appropriate.

The sample was selected using convenience sampling due to ease of access to Gen Z consumers through digital platforms. It involves collecting data from individuals who are readily available and willing to participate (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Convenience sampling is advantageous due to time and cost effectiveness. But there is a tendency for sampling bias, statistical errors, and poor generalizability (Golzar, et al., 2022, P.73-75). Accordingly, convenience sampling was used to reach out to participants through university student networks and mailing lists, social media platforms popular among Gen Z in Finland, and friends who fit the target profile.

3.4 Data Collection and Measurement

This explains how data were collected and measured to ensure that the research findings are valid, reliable, and replicable. It details the tools used to gather responses and the procedures followed to administer the survey. Furthermore, it outlines how the collected data were prepared for analysis, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and methodological standards.

3.4.1 Data Collection Tool

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), if the research strategy is based on a survey strategy, then the researcher could collect data via a questionnaire or a structured interview. Accordingly, the data from the sample was collected by administering a questionnaire via Google Forms. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a questionnaire can be described as a systematically prepared list of written questions that elicit responses from participants, generally using specified answer choices. This method was chosen due to its cost and time effectiveness, standardized approach, ability to reach a large geographically dispersed sample, ease of administration and coding, and capacity to ensure respondent anonymity. However, there is a lack of depth and flexibility, and risk of misinterpretation of questions, limited to literate respondents, and a possibility of low response rates.

The questionnaire was tailored to examine attitudinal, normative, and behavioral control factors influencing Finnish Gen Z consumers' IASHC. It consisted of both demographic questions and construct-based Likert-scale items adapted from validated academic sources. However, there was an eligibility requirement for answering the questionnaire. Hence, only people aged 18–28, currently residing in Finland, who regularly or occasionally shop from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara) were allowed to respond to the questionnaire. The survey instrument was distributed and completed during August 2025 to mid-September 2025. The questionnaires were disseminated through multiple digital channels to maximize reach within the target population. Specifically, the researcher shared the survey via university networks, WhatsApp groups, Instagram stories, and personal networking platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The use of these online networks was particularly suitable given the high digital engagement of Finnish Gen Z consumers and the geographical dispersion of the target population.

According to Dillman et al. (2014), in the current digital age, sample surveys have become a widely used method for collecting data across a range of contexts. Web-based questionnaires allow researchers to reach diverse populations through multiple contact modes (e.g., email, smartphone, or tablet), making it easier to obtain responses quickly and from geographically dispersed participants. This makes electronic platforms such as Google Forms particularly suited for studies involving digitally active cohorts like Gen Z. Despite their advantages, electronic surveys are not without challenges. These web-based questionnaires may not reach digitally disadvantaged people, sampling error (due to partial population coverage), and measurement error (inaccurate or biased responses due to poor design or misunderstanding). Given the widespread digital literacy and internet access among Finnish Gen Z consumers, this study adopted an electronic survey format using Google Forms, aligning with modern survey practices and ensuring efficient data collection while keeping error levels within acceptable limits. To avoid missing values and ensure completeness of the dataset, all questions were made mandatory, and follow-up reminders were sent. The questionnaire is given in Appendix 2.
Once collected, the data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

3.4.2 Data Measurement

All the constructs were measured using five-point Likert scale questions (1 = Strongly Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree), and the items were obtained from prior studies to ensure content validity. It is given in detail in the operationalization of the questionnaire table in Appendix 3. The items used to measure the DV of IASHC were adapted from Tymoshchuk et al. (2024). The five items that were used to measure PFV were adapted from Mobarak et al. (2025), measuring consumers' confidence in SHC's quality, durability, and hygiene. Items for EIA were adapted from Kim et al. (2021) and Sepe et al. (2024), capturing the extent to which SHC generates emotional satisfaction and aligns with personal or ethical identity. Ge (2024) was used as the reference source for adopting the items used to measure SMI. Then, to measure FSC, four items were adapted from Mobarak et al. (2025) and one from Prisco et al. (2025), reflecting the perceived social judgment or pressure related to fashion choices. PAC was measured by adapting questions from Koay et al. (2024), and PFF was measured using five items adapted from Cavazos-Arroyo and Zapata-Sánchez (2025),

Additionally, demographic information such as gender, age, monthly income, and frequency of fashion purchases was collected to describe the sample characteristics. These demographics help contextualize the findings, as prior studies show they can shape fashion preferences and sustainability attitudes (Kim et al., 2021; Mobarak et al., 2025). However, they were not included as control variables in the regression analysis.

As a means of measuring the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. When analyzing the demographic data, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages were used to describe the respondents and mean, and standard deviation were used to measure the central tendency and dispersion of the responses. Furthermore, to analyze the descriptive statistics of the conceptual variables, the mean value was obtained by considering the degree of agreement or disagreement with each item. Accordingly, the mean score for each item was calculated by summing respondents' scores and dividing by the number of responses, providing an average level of agreement. Accordingly, the mean represents the average score obtained from all respondents in the sample for each item or question. Hence, if the mean value is equal to three, then the level of agreement for all the questions or items under the corresponding variable, as responded by all the respondents, is neutral. But if the mean value for all the items under the corresponding variable as responded by all the respondents is above three, the level of agreement is high, and if the mean value is less than three, then the level of agreement is low.

With regard to inferential statistics, the determination of whether the hypotheses are substantiated or not is based on a confidence level of 95%. Hence, at 5% significance level. Therefore, if the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypotheses are rejected. Furthermore, as the study was based on more than one independent or explanatory variable, multiple regression analysis was used. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), multiple regression analysis is a multivariate technique employed by a researcher to predict the variance in a single DV based on two or more IVs. This method is particularly effective for testing conceptual models and hypotheses derived from theory. The regression coefficients indicate the direction and strength of the relationship between each predictor and the outcome variable, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) reveals the overall variance in the DV explained by the model. To compare the influence of predictors measured on different scales, standardized beta coefficients were used. The method also accounts for potential issues such as multicollinearity, which occurs when IVs are highly correlated and may distort the results. Overall, multiple regression analysis is an essential tool for identifying key drivers in behavioral and organizational research and for validating theoretical models with empirical data. (p.312-330.)

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations when Administering the Questionnaire

In alignment with ethical standards outlined by Bryman and Bell (2007) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016), this study addressed all major ethical dimensions to safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of the respondents. Participation in this investigation was optional and left to the discretion of the individuals, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Respondents were fully informed about the aim, scope, and purpose of the study. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the study did not collect any personally identifiable information such as names or contact details. The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered, and the researcher personally ensured that all responses were handled with strict confidentiality. Sensitive questions were deliberately excluded to minimize any psychological discomfort. The language used throughout the instrument was clear, neutral, and appropriate for the target demographic, avoiding any form of offensive or discriminatory terminology. Moreover, the researcher maintained objectivity and impartiality during the data analysis process, ensuring transparency and the avoidance of any manipulation or misrepresentation of results.

3.5 Goodness of Measures: Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility, consistency, and scientific rigor of the research instrument, the concepts of validity and reliability, collectively referred to as the goodness of measures, were systematically addressed. As per Sekaran and Bougie (2016), Validity is defined as the extent to which a measurement tool truly measures the variables it claims to measure, and reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement across time and conditions. Both dimensions are critical to the development of a good questionnaire and to the trustworthiness of findings.

3.5.1 Validity

Validity was assessed under different categories. Content validity assesses how comprehensively the items represent all dimensions of the construct under study. Content validity was secured by designing the questionnaire items through an extensive review of existing academic studies. A subset of content validity is face validity, which refers to the degree to which the items on the surface represent what they are supposed to measure. Face validity was evaluated through judgment, ensuring the wording, structure, and relevance of each question were appropriate for the target audience. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.221.) Construct validity concerns whether the instrument truly measures the theoretical concept it purports to measure. Construct validity was enhanced by ensuring that all items aligned with existing conceptual frameworks and the TPB, confirming the appropriateness of each indicator. In addition, all items were obtained from prior studies, and it was ensured that indicators within each construct were theoretically coherent but distinct from other constructs. Additionally, criterion-related validity assesses how well one measure correlates with an external benchmark or criterion (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.221). Though not measured statistically in this study, criterion validity was considered during instrument design by referencing validated items from similar previous studies (e.g., Koay et al., 2024; Mobarak et al., 2025).

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability was assessed through internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and inter-rater reliability. Internal consistency reliability determines the level to which all the items measure the corresponding variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.224). Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, where scores exceeding the 0.70 benchmark were considered satisfactory (Ahmad et al., 2024). Test–retest reliability refers to the ability of testing the results over time and the attainment of consistent results (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.224).Test–retest reliability could not be assessed due to the cross-sectional design, which prevented repeated administration of the instrument over time. Inter-Rater Reliability assesses the consistency of ratings across different observers or raters (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.224). This was not applicable in the current study, as the questionnaire was self-administered online and did not involve subjective evaluation by raters. By attending to these dimensions, the questionnaire was designed to meet high methodological standards, ensuring that the instrument was fit for purpose.

3.6 Chapter Summary

The study was a conclusive descriptive research and was grounded in realism, positivism, and objectivism. The study was quantitative research conducted as a one-shot study in a non-contrived setting. A sample of one hundred respondents was selected based on convenience sampling. The data were collected by administering a questionnaire via Google Forms in August. The responses were analyzed using SPSS, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to ensure rigorous analysis and interpretation. This methodology provided a systematic foundation for addressing the study's research questions.

4 Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the analysis of the survey data using SPSS. It begins by outlining data screening procedures, followed by the presentation of descriptive statistics for demographic data and the conceptual variables. Then, the test results of validity and reliability are presented, followed by preliminary statistical analyses, inclusive of tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and correlation analysis. Ultimately, regression analysis results are presented in support of addressing whether the hypotheses were substantiated or not.

4.1 Survey Completion Rate

In this study, questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms using a URL link via social networks rather than a closed mailing list. Therefore, the total number of individuals who viewed or received the link could not be precisely tracked. Therefore, a conventional response rate could not be computed, as is typical for online surveys where the number of invitations is unknown. This aligns with Keeter et al. (2017, p.1) of the Pew Research Center, who note that "the rates reported for online opt-in surveys are almost always participation or completion rates rather than response rates." As the questions in the Google form were made compulsory, 100 completed questionnaires were received, ensuring a full dataset for subsequent analyses.

4.2 Pre-Analysis Data Preparation

This section outlines the procedures applied to validate the quality and analytical suitability of the collected data. Following established methodological guidelines (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.276), data screening and cleaning were conducted to identify and correct issues that could compromise the validity and reliability of the findings.

4.2.1 Missing Value Analysis and Outlier Detection

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.276-277), data were analyzed for detecting any missing values in the responses that arise due to either voluntary or erroneous omissions by the respondents. However, in the current study, missing data were effectively eliminated at the design stage by configuring all questionnaire items as mandatory fields.

Outliers were examined to detect any unusually high or low values within the dataset that can distort statistical measures, thereby affecting the accuracy of data interpretation (Bryman, 2007, p. 714). Nominal and ordinal variables, such as the demographic characteristics, were measured using minimum and maximum values, while boxplots or scatter diagrams were used for the conceptual variables. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.273.) No significant outliers were detected, confirming the dataset's consistency; supporting boxplots and diagnostics are provided in Appendix 4.1.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Data Analysis

A descriptive examination of the data is presented in this section, first addressing demographic characteristics and subsequently describing the conceptual variables: Perceived Functional Value (PFV), Emotional and Identity Alignment (EIA), Social Media and Influencer Impact (SMI), Fear of Social Criticism (FSC), Perceived Access and Convenience (PAC) and Perceived Financial Feasibility (PFF). This preliminary analysis provides a foundational understanding of the sample and the distribution of variables by summarizing and simplifying complex datasets into easily interpretable formats, which is essential for interpreting subsequent inferential analyses.

4.3.1 Frequency Distribution of Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profile was analyzed using frequency distributions covering key variables such as gender, age, monthly income, education level, occupation, environmental or sustainability concerns on clothing consumption, and clothing consumption behavior and preferences. The detailed table of frequencies is presented in Appendix 4.2.

In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 55 females and 44 males, with one respondent identifying as non-binary. This gender distribution reflected a balanced yet slightly female-dominant representation. The greater part of the sample (40%) was within the age category of 24-26 years, while the minority of the respondents (6%) fell within the age category of 18-20 years. Hence, this sample indicated a strong representation of young adults in the middle-to-late university or early working stages of life. The majority of the respondents (60%) were within the monthly income category of €1,000 – €1,499, while the minority of the respondents (5%) were within the income category of less than €500 and €2,000 or more, indicating that most respondents had moderate disposable income levels.

The educational profile of respondents revealed that a majority held a bachelor's degree (55%), followed by a master's degree or higher (25%), indicating that 80% of the sample had completed higher education. In terms of main occupation, the sample consisted of 40 students, 35 employed respondents, 20 unemployed respondents, and 5 self-employed respondents, reflecting a predominantly active or educationally engaged Gen Z demographic. In terms of monthly clothing expenditure, the majority of the sample, amounting to 42 respondents, spent €30–€60 per month on clothing, while 35 respondents spent less than €30. Only 23% of participants reported spending above €60. This pattern suggests that most Gen Z participants were budget-conscious when it comes to fashion consumption.

When considering the influence of sustainability concerns on clothing choices, the results indicated that 64% of respondents acknowledged at least some level of influence from sustainability concerns on their clothing choices, suggesting a moderate level of environmental consciousness among the sample group. The majority of respondents (55%) reported purchasing fast fashion clothing occasionally, and only 7% claimed they never do so, suggesting that fast fashion is still a prevalent option among most participants. The majority of respondents (65%) followed fashion-related content on social media, with 35% primarily engaging with fast fashion content and 30% with both fast fashion and second-hand fashion equally. Only 20% focused mainly on second-hand or circular fashion content, and 15% did not follow any fashion-related content. This suggests that fast fashion maintained a stronger social media presence among the respondents. Moreover, the findings showed that SHC (32%) was the preferred future clothing option among respondents, followed by ethical/sustainable brands (20%). Meanwhile, fast fashion (18%) still retained a notable share of preference, indicating that while many Gen Z consumers were moving toward sustainable options, traditional fast fashion continued to hold relevance.

Additional Insights From the Demographics

Beyond the general frequency distributions, an additional cross-tabulated insight was generated to better understand demographic factors and IASHC.

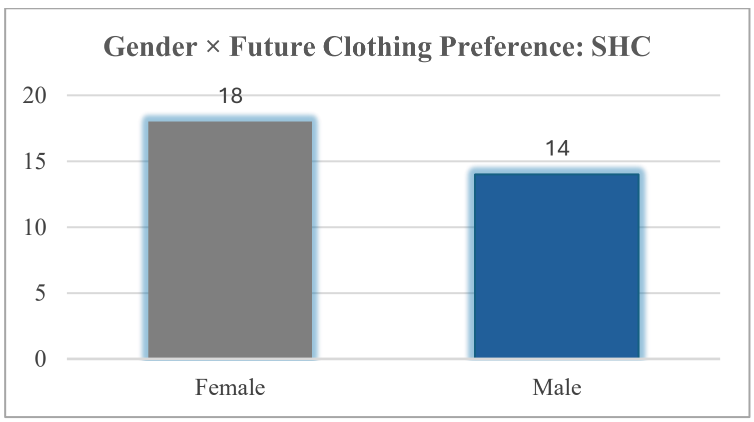

Figure 6. Gender and future preference for SHC (Author Compilation)

As in Figure 6, the results indicate that women (n = 18) show a higher preference for second-hand clothing compared to men (n = 14). This suggests that female Gen Z consumers are relatively more inclined toward sustainable apparel choices.

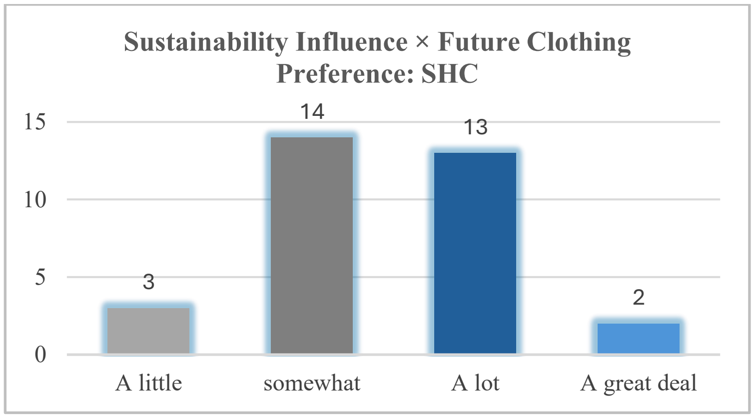

Figure 7. Influence of sustainability concerns on future preference for SHC (Authors Compilation)

As presented in Figure 7, respondents who reported “somewhat” or “a lot” of sustainability influence demonstrated the highest IASHC. Conversely, those with minimal sustainability concern showed lower SHC interest. This indicates that sustainability awareness plays a meaningful role in shaping SHC preference among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

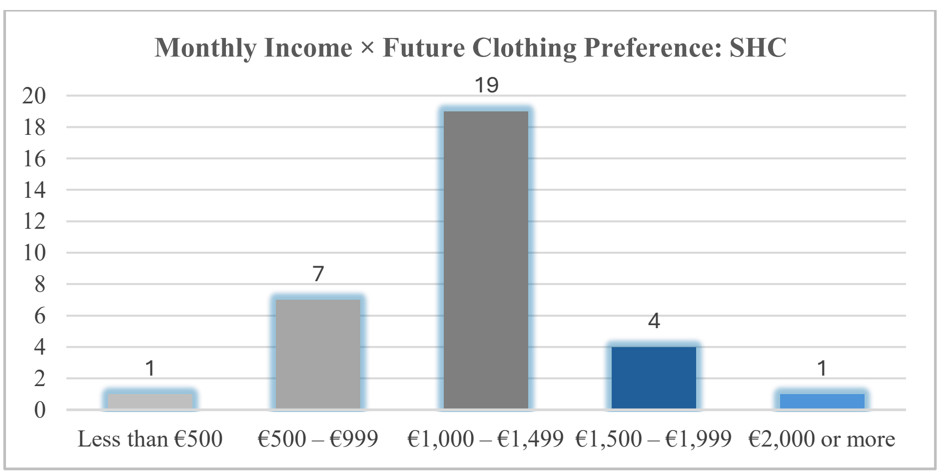

Figure 8. Monthly income level and future preference for SHC (Authors Compilation)

Moderate-income respondents (€1,000–€1,499) showed the strongest SHC preference, suggesting SHC appeals most to consumers with steady but modest financial capacity. Low-income groups showed little interest, implying that affordability alone does not drive SHC adoption.

4.3.2 Frequency Distribution of Conceptual Variables

The analysis includes measures of central tendency (mean and median) as well as dispersion (standard deviation (SD) and variance). The outcomes of respondents' evaluations for the construct items are detailed in Tables 2 to 8.

Table 2.Descriptive Statistics for PFV Items (Survey Results)

	PFV1	PFV2	PFV3	PFV4	PFV5
Mean	**4.72**	4.69	**4.60**	4.61	4.62
Median	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Mode	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	.494	.526	.603	.567	.546
Variance	.244	.277	.364	.321	.299

Table 2 presents the mean values for all PFV items. All mean values were above the neutral midpoint of 3, indicating that respondents agreed that higher PFV results in higher SHC shopping. The greatest average value of 4.72 (SD = 0.494) was for the variable for the item of "*I believe SHC is of equal or higher quality compared to new clothing*.", indicating most respondents firmly believe second-hand clothes are of high quality. The next highest mean value of 4.69 (SD = 0.526) was for the item of "*I believe SHC is free from hidden defects*." The lowest mean score of 4.60 (SD = 0.603) was for the item, "*I believe SHC is clean and hygienic*." Overall, the results suggested strong confidence in the durability, condition, and quality of SHC. Only minor differences were observed among the mean scores of the other items.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for EIA Items (Survey Results)

	EIA1	EIA2	EIA3	EIA4	EIA5
Mean	**4.51**	4.37	4.31	**4.24**	4.30
Median	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	.577	.677	.615	.668	.644
Variance	.333	.458	.378	.447	.414

As shown in Table 3, all mean scores for EIA exceeded the neutral midpoint, suggesting overall agreement. The highest average response was 4.51 (SD = 0.577) for the statement "*I feel happy when I wear SHC*.", indicating a strong emotional resonance with second-hand fashion. The lowest mean score, 4.24 (SD = 0.668), was reported for the item "*SHC provides joy and pleasure*". Respondents have also agreed much more to the fact that "*Purchasing SHC makes me feel good*." (mean of 4.37). The mean value differences between EIA3 and EIA5 were minimal. These results suggest that SHC is not only seen as a sustainable option but also one that aligns with personal emotions, ethical standards, and self-identity.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for SMI Items (Survey Results)

	SMI1	**SMI2**	**SMI3**	**SMI4**	**SMI5**
Mean	**4.20**	4.25	4.25	**4.46**	4.30
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	4	5	4
Std. Deviation	.532	.435	.435	.610	.628
Variance	.283	.189	.189	.372	.394

As presented in Table 4, the mean values for all SMI items were above the neutral midpoint, indicating overall agreement. The highest mean score of 4.46 (SD = 0.610) was recorded for the item "*I would follow product recommendations from influencers about SHC*", while the lowest mean score of 4.20 (SD = 0.532) was for the item "*I would like to watch influencers' experiences on their channels regarding SHC purchases*". The mean scores for the items, "*I would like to imitate influencers' behaviors towards buying SHC, as I feel as if I am part of their group,*" and "*I would purchase SHC promoted by an influencer in the future,*" were equal. These findings suggest that SMI played a substantial role in shaping perceptions and interest toward SHC.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for FSC Items (Survey Results)

	FSC1	**FSC2**	**FSC3**	**FSC4**	**FSC5**
Mean	4.46	4.47	**4.39**	**4.49**	4.45
Median	5.00	4.50	4.00	5.00	5.00
Mode	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	.626	.559	.634	.659	.657
Variance	.392	.312	.402	.434	.432

The results in Table 5 indicated a strong level of agreement across the items, suggesting that many respondents experience concerns about social judgment related to fast fashion consumption. All the items had mean scores above 4.3, with the highest mean of 4.49 (SD = 0.659) observed for FSC4: "*I worry about feeling socially unacceptable while purchasing fast fashion clothes"*. This suggests that social concerns to maintain a positive image may discourage fast fashion consumption. The lowest mean of 4.39 (SD = 0.634) was for "*I worry that purchasing fast fashion clothes may impact me negatively*". The difference in mean scores between other items was minimal.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for PAC Items (Survey Results)

	PAC1	**PAC2**	**PAC3**	**PAC4**	**PAC5**
Mean	4.50	4.64	4.58	**4.66**	**4.43**
Median	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	5	5	4
Std. Deviation	.689	.628	.606	.572	.555
Variance	.475	.394	.367	.328	.308

As in Table 6, the results for the PAC indicated a generally high level of agreement among respondents. The highest mean score was 4.66 (SD = 0.572) for PAC4: "*I think buying SHC is easy because products are highly visible and well displayed in stores*.", emphasizing the importance of product displays that support second-hand purchases. This highlighted how clarity in presentation can enhance consumer confidence. The lowest mean score of 4.43 (SD = 0.555) was for the item of "*I can easily fit second-hand fashion shopping into my daily routine*". The difference between the mean scores of the other items was minimal. These findings indicate that ease of access and information clarity are key enablers of SHC engagement.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for PFF Items (Survey Results)

	PFF1	**PFF2**	**PFF3**	**PFF4**	**PFF5**
Mean	4.21	**4.04**	**4.22**	4.08	4.08
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	.537	.680	.524	.646	.646
Variance	.289	.463	.274	.418	.418

As presented in Table 7, the findings for the PFF items suggest that respondents generally viewed SHC as an economically sensible alternative to fast fashion because the mean values were above 4. The largest mean value of 4.22 (SD = 0.524) was for the item of "*SHC is a good product, considering the price it costs,*" followed closely by 4.21 (SD = 0.537) for "*SHC is reasonably priced*". The lowest mean score value of 4.04 (SD = 0.680) was for the item "*SHC offers good value for money*". Overall, these results indicate that Finnish Gen Z consumers view SHC as an economically sensible alternative to fast fashion.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for IASHC (Survey Results)

	CSI1	CSI2	CSI3	CSI4
Mean	4.19	**4.25**	**4.17**	4.20
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	.615	.520	.587	.603
Variance	.378	.270	.345	.364

Table 8 presents the descriptive results for IASHC. The top mean rating of 4.25 (SD = 0.520) was for the item "*I plan to purchase second-hand clothes*", while the lowest mean score of 4.17 (SD = 0.587) was for the item "*I will purchase second-hand clothes in my next purchase*". The difference between the mean scores for CSI1 and CSI4 was minimal. These findings suggest that consumers were willing to adopt sustainable fashion choices, such as SHC, but they do not seem to completely leave behind fast fashion choices.

4.4 Tests of Reliability and Validity

This section presents the assessment of the reliability and validity of the data. As emphasized in research methodology, reliability is a prerequisite for validity. Given that the study utilized multiple scale-based variables within the questionnaire, appropriate statistical techniques were applied to evaluate both aspects. Internal consistency, measured via Cronbach's Alpha, served as the main approach for testing reliability, while validity was assessed using factor analysis.

These assessments confirmed that the data used for further analysis were both consistent and representative of the constructs intended to be measured.

4.4.1 Reliability Test – Cronbach’s Alpha

Table 9 presents the measurement guide for interpreting Cronbach’s values. The Cronbach´s alpha values for all the variables, as per SPSS results, are presented in Table 10.

Table 9. Measurement Guide for Interpreting Cronbach’s Alpha Values (Nunnally, 1978, Adapted from Ahmad et al., 2024, p.116)

Cronbach´s Alpha values	**Reliability level**
Below 0.60	Poor
0.60 - 0.69	Questionable
0.70 - 0.79	Acceptable
0.80 - 0.89	Good
0.90 and above	Excellent

Table 10. Cronbach’s Alpha Values for Key Constructs (Survey Results)

Variable	**Cronbach´s Alpha values**	**Reliability level**
PFV	.861	Good
EIA	.887	Good
SMI	.602	Questionable
FSC	.741	Acceptable
PAC	.761	Acceptable
PFF	.893	Good
IASHC	.796	Acceptable

Cronbach’s values for most constructs were above 0.7, achieving acceptable levels of internal consistency, except SMI, which had a questionable reliability level ($\alpha = 0.602$). This suggested a need for further refinement or validation of the measurement items of the SMI variable. Possible reasons for the lower reliability could include ambiguous wording, overlapping concepts, or diverse interpretations of influencer-related behaviors among Finnish Gen Z consumers. Hence, the construct was better captured using factor analysis.

4.4.2 Validity Test – Factor Analysis

To ensure the construct validity of the measurement model, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to examine the interrelationships of observed variables and assess if items presumed to be linked theoretically actually converge in practice (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.222). Refer to Table 11 for full results. According to Kaiser (1974, p.35), KMO values between 0.90-1.00 are considered ‘marvelous,’ 0.80-0.89 ‘meritorious,’ 0.70-0.79 ‘middling,’ 0.60-0.69 ‘mediocre,’ 0.50-0.59 ‘miserable,’ and below 0.50 ‘unacceptable.

Table 11. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results (Survey Results)

Construct	Item	KMO and Bartlett's Test			Total Variance Explained		Factor loading	
		KMO	Approx. Chi-Square	Sig.	Initial Eigenvalues Total	% of Variance		
PFV	1				**3.245**	**64.893**	**.861**	
	2	.805			.688	13.751	.847	
	3	Meritorious	234.944	.000	.510	10.206	.817	
	4	(0.8–1.0)			.306	6.111	.764	
	5				.252	5.038	**.732**	
EIA	1				**3.449**	**68.981**	**.783**	
	2	.863			.515	10.293	.817	
	3	Meritorious	257.781	.000	.434	8.680	.846	
	4	(0.8–1.0)			.331	6.627	**.859**	
	5				.271	5.418	.846	
SMI	1				**1.941**	**38.823**	.682	.104
	2	.632			**1.054**	**21.085**	.564	.429
	3	Mediocre	53.726	.000	.804	16.072	.420	.675
	4	(0.6–0.7)			.711	14.214	.660	-.554
	5				.490	9.807	.739	-.311
FSC	1				**2.509**	**50.190**	**.447**	
	2	.777			.920	18.404	.639	
	3	Middling	113.837	.000	.670	13.394	.729	
	4	(0.7–0.8)			.514	10.273	.823	
	5				.387	7.739	**.832**	
PAC	1				**2.658**	**53.166**	.597	
	2	.710			.908	18.167	.849	
	3	Middling	163.599	.000	.785	15.704	.816	
	4	(0.7–0.8)			.415	8.295	**.859**	
	5				.233	4.668	**.421**	

PFF	1 2 3 4 5	.864 Meritorious (0.8–1.0)	276.650	.000	**3.529** .469 .444 .294 .263	**70.588** 9.389 8.890 5.871 5.262	.848 **.863** **.814** .853 .821
IASHC	1 2 3 4	.770 Middling (0.7–0.8)	120.022	.000	**2.498** .605 .546 .351	**62.449** 15.129 13.656 8.766	**.845** .814 **.736** .761

Since the KMO values for all variables except SMI were between 0.7 and 1, the correlations among items measuring the variables were sufficient to produce reliable factors. However, since the KMO value for SMI of 0.632 was below 0.8, it suggested that the variable´s validity was mediocre. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$) for all variables, demonstrating that the correlation matrices were not equivalent to an identity matrix, which supported the application of factor analysis.

The total variance and eigenvalues showed that all constructs, except SMI, were unidimensional. PFV (eigenvalue = 3.245; 64.89%), EIA (3.449; 68.98%), FSC (2.509; 50.19%), PAC (2.658; 53.17%), PFF (3.529; 71.0%), and IASHC (2.498; 62.45%) each produced a single factor explaining more than 50% of the variance. Hence, a single factor adequately captured the variance shared by the five items, confirming their validity. In contrast, SMI produced two components with eigenvalues above 1, explaining a cumulative variance of 59.91% (38.82% and 21.08%, respectively). Together, these factors provided an adequate representation of the SMI construct.

All constructs showed acceptable factor loadings, confirming validity and reliability. For PFV (0.732–0.861), PFV1 had the highest loading and PFV5 the lowest. EIA (0.783–0.859) was highest for EIA4 and lowest for EIA1. In SMI, SMI1, SMI4, and SMI5 loaded strongly on the first component, reflecting influencer-driven behavioral. SMI2 and SMI3 loaded on the second component, representing observational or passive engagement (e.g., watching influencer content without strong behavioral commitment). FSC (0.447–0.832) was strongest for FSC4 and FSC5 and weakest for FSC1. PAC (0.421–0.859) was strongest for PAC4 and weakest for PAC5. For PFF (0.814–0.863), PFF2 had the highest loading and PFF3 the lowest.

4.5 Preliminary Statistics and Data Analysis

This section presents preliminary statistical procedures conducted to assess the readiness of the dataset for further analysis following the recommendations of Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Before performing regression analysis, key assumptions were tested to ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the model. Normality tests were conducted to determine whether the distribution followed a normal curve using visual representations and statistical (e.g., skewness and kurtosis) indicators. Linearity was assessed to confirm that the relationships between IVs and DV were linear. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), together with tolerance measures, was used to examine multicollinearity and reveal potential predictor redundancy. The analysis concluded with Pearson’s correlation coefficients and regression results, which measured the strength and direction of inter-variable associations.

4.5.1 Normality Assessment

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.239), normality underlies the central limit theorem, which states that the sampling distribution of the mean tends to be normal as the sample size increases, with most observations clustered around the mean and fewer at the extremes. As per Yang´s and Berdine´s (2021, p.87; Kim, 2013) statistical guidelines on assessing normality, this research assessed normality both statistically and visually. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined as quantitative indicators as presented in Table 12. Visual methods included histograms (general visual overview) and Q–Q plots (more precise assessment) to detect any major deviations from normality. Both histograms and Q–Q plots were examined; full visual outputs are provided in Appendix 4.3, as they offer complementary insights into distribution shape and deviation from theoretical normality.

- **Rules of Thumb for Numerical Evaluation**

Skewness - Skewness is an indicator of the degree of symmetry in a distribution. Skewness values between –1 and +1 are considered approximately normal. Values beyond ±1 may indicate substantial skewness. (Kim, 2013.)

Kurtosis - Kurtosis evaluates the "tailedness" (peakedness or flatness) of the curve.. Kurtosis values between –2 and +2 are generally acceptable for assuming normality. Values higher than +2 suggest leptokurtic (peaked) distributions, and lower than –2 suggest platykurtic (flat) distributions. (Kim, 2013.)

<u>Skewness and kurtosis values</u>

Table 12. Numerical Evaluation of the Variables using Skewness and Kurtosis Values (Survey Results)

Variable	Skewness	Result	Kurtosis	Result	Normality
PFV	-1.559	Slightly negative skew	2.762	Leptokurtic (peaked)	Approx. normal
EIA	-0.227	Acceptable	-0.752	Acceptable	Yes
SMI	-0.225	Acceptable	0.712	Acceptable	Yes
FSC	-0.391	Acceptable	-1.157	Acceptable	Yes
PAC	-1.140	Slightly negative skew	0.757	Acceptable	Approx. normal
PFF	0.271	Acceptable	-0.378	Acceptable	Yes
IASHC	0.086	Acceptable	-0.852	Acceptable	Yes

All skewness values in the dataset were between –1 and +1, except for PFV (–1.559) and PAC (–1.140), which fall slightly outside this range, indicating a modest negative skew. Such deviations are common in behavioral survey data. Given the sample size (N = 100), the Central Limit Theorem ensures that regression estimates remain robust to moderate non-normality. Therefore, the distributions were considered acceptable for regression analysis. When considering kurtosis values, most constructs fell within the recommended range of –2 to +2, except PFV (2.762), which suggested a leptokurtic/peaked distribution. However, it was a mild deviation.

4.5.2 Linearity Testing

According to Koyande (2024, p.322), linearity refers to the assumption that the relationship between each IV (X) and the DV (Y) is linear. To verify this assumption, scatterplots were analyzed. Refer to Appendix 4.4 for the full set of scatterplot visualizations corresponding to each IV and the DV. If a linear relationship is not apparent, transformations such as logarithmic or square root conversions or variable removal could be done. Failure to meet this assumption can result in biased estimates and poor predictive accuracy.

Due to the data points being clustered around the regression lines, all the scatter plots showed linear patterns. Although some dispersion was visible in SMI and FSC, particularly at the extremes, no substantial curvature was observed in any scatterplot.

4.5.3 Multicollinearity Diagnosis

Multicollinearity was evaluated in line with the criteria proposed by Sekaran & Bougie (2016, p.316). It refers to a statistical condition in which two or more IVs in a regression model are highly correlated, potentially distorting the reliability of coefficient estimates and the interpretation of predictor effects. It was tested using the VIF and Tolerance values as reported in Table 13. A VIF greater than 10 or a Tolerance value below 0.10 typically signals problematic multicollinearity (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.316).

Table 13. VIF and Tolerance Values for Variables (Survey Results)

Variables	**PFV**	**EIA**	**SMI**	**FSC**	**PAC**	**PFF**
VIF	2.300	2.733	1.425	1.052	2.500	1.841
Tolerance	0.435	0.366	0.702	0.950	0.400	0.543

VIF values were less than 10 and tolerance values were greater than 0.10, indicating that the model did not suffer from multicollinearity and that the predictors were statistically independent.

4.5.4 Correlation Analysis

As per Schober, et al. (2018, p.1763), correlational analysis is a statistical tool used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables through Pearson coefficient values. Correlation does not imply causation; a near-zero correlation does not necessarily mean no relationship, and nonlinear or complex associations may still exist. According to the approach to interpreting a correlation coefficient by Schober, et al. (2018, p.1765), if the correlation coefficient is between 0.00-0.10, the variables have a negligible correlation, 0.10-0.39; weak correlation, 0.40-0.69; moderate correlation, 0.70-0.89; strong correlation, and 0.90-1.00; very strong correlation. Table 14 provides the correlation coefficients.

Table 14. Pearson Correlation Values for all the IVs and the DV (Survey Results)

Variables	Correlation coefficient	P value	Significance of the relationship at 5% significance level
PFV	.685**	.000	Significant
EIA	.735**	.000	Significant
SMI	.549**	.000	Significant
FSC	.150	.136	Insignificant
PAC	.704**	.000	Significant
PFF	.655**	.000	Significant

Based on the guidelines of Schober et al. (2018), PFV, SMI, and PFF showed moderate correlations with IASHC, while EIA and PAC demonstrated strong correlations. FSC showed only a weak and statistically insignificant association.

4.6 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis is a mathematical measure used to identify the predictive relationship between the conceptual variables. Since the study included more than one IV, multiple regression analysis was used. Regression analysis in SPSS produced three main outputs: the model summary, the ANOVA table, and the coefficients table. The model summary presented the R, R-squared, and adjusted R-squared values. The ANOVA table showed the overall significance of the model, while the coefficients table provided the beta values and significance levels for each IV. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.312.) The results of these analyses are presented in the following subsections.

4.6.1 Simple Linear Regression Results for Individual Predictors

Model Summaries – R^2 and Adjusted R^2

Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.313) explain that R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the DV that can be explained by the IVs. The adjusted R^2, however, offers a more accurate measure as it accounts for the loss of degrees of freedom when additional explanatory variables are included in the model, as presented in Table 15.

Table 15. R2 and Adjusted R2 for Individual Predictor Regressions (Survey Results)

Variable	R Squared	Adjusted R-squared
PFV	.469	.464
EIA	.540	.535
SMI	.301	.294
FSC	.022	.013
PAC	.496	.490
PFF	.429	.424

The explanatory variable of PFV explained 46% of the variance in the DV, EIA explained 53% of the variation, SMI explained 29% of the variation, FSC explained 1.3% of the variation, PAC explained 49% of the variation, and PFF explained 42% of the variation.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA tested whether there were statistically significant differences between group means within a sample and the results are summarized in Table 16. Further, if the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the model is considered statistically significant. This indicates that the IVs reliably predict the DV. Conversely, if the p-value exceeds 0.05, the model lacks statistical significance, suggesting that the predictors do not provide a reliable explanation of the DV. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.312.)

Table 16. F-Statistics and Model Significance for Individual Predictor Regressions (Survey Results)

Variable	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PFV	Regression	9.780	1	9.780	86.683	.000[b]
	Residual	11.057	98	.113		
EIA	Regression	11.251	1	11.251	115.020	.000[b]
	Residual	9.586	98	.098		
SMI	Regression	6.271	1	6.271	42.190	.000[b]
	Residual	14.566	98	.149		
FSC	Regression	.469	1	.469	2.254	.136[b]
	Residual	20.368	98	.208		
PAC	Regression	10.326	1	10.326	96.283	.000[b]
	Residual	10.511	98	.107		
PFF	Regression	8.949	1	8.949	73.772	.000[b]
	Residual	11.888	98	.121		

The ANOVA results confirmed that most of the IVs have a statistically significant effect on the DV. Specifically, PFV ($F = 86.683$, $p < .001$), EIA ($F = 115.020$, $p < .001$), SMI ($F = 42.190$, $p < .001$), PAC ($F = 96.283$, $p < .001$), and PFF ($F = 73.772$, $p < .001$) were all found to significantly predict the IASHC. In contrast, FSC ($F = 2.254$, $p = .136$) was not statistically significant, indicating that FSC did not have a meaningful predictive effect in this context.

Coefficients for Variables

Following the recommendation of Sekaran and Bougie (2016, p.313), the coefficients are categorized as standardized and unstandardized, while standardized coefficients were used for comparing which variable has the strongest effect, and unstandardized coefficients were used for hypothesis testing to show how much the DV changes per unit change in the IV. Further, the t-value determines whether the coefficient is significantly different from 0, and the significance value determines whether the predicting variables significantly predict the DV or not. Hence, the coefficients table, as presented in Table 17, facilitated determining which predictors are actually driving that significance, and how strongly.

Table 17. Coefficient Table for Individual Predictor Regressions (Survey Results)

Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	.879	.359		2.452	.016
	PFV	.715	.077	**.685**	9.310	.000
1	(Constant)	1.431	.260		5.498	.000
	EIA	.638	.059	**.735**	10.725	.000
1	(Constant)	.803	.525		1.529	.129
	SMI	.790	.122	**.549**	6.495	.000
1	(Constant)	3.506	.466		7.528	.000
	FSC	.156	.104	**.150**	1.501	.136
1	(Constant)	.865	.342		2.532	.013
	PAC	.732	.075	**.704**	9.812	.000
1	(Constant)	1.773	.285		6.222	.000
	PFF	.589	.069	**.655**	8.589	.000

All the IVs except for FSC reliably predicted the DV, as the p-values were less than 0.05, indicating that each had a statistically significant positive effect on IASHC when tested individually. Among them, EIA ($\beta = .735$) emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by PAC ($\beta = .704$), PFV ($\beta = .685$), PFF ($\beta = .655$), and SMI ($\beta = .549$)

4.6.2 Multiple Regression Results for the Overall Model

The purpose of this section is to determine whether the hypotheses given in Table 1 were substantiated or not, and the results of the multiple regression are presented in Tables 18 and 19.

Table 18. Model Summaries and ANOVA for the Entire Model (Survey Results)

Model Summaries					
R	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**		**Std. Error of the Estimate**	
.851[a]	.724	.706		.24889	
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	15.076	6	2.513	40.561	.000[b]
Residual	5.761	93	.062		

All the variables together explained 71% of the variation of the DV. The overall model was also statistically significant ($F = 40.561$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the combined influence of the six IVs reliably explained variance in the DV.

Table 19. Coefficient Table for the Entire Model (Survey Results)

Coefficients[a]						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	**(Constant)**	**-1.049**	.447		-2.345	.021
	PFV	**.196**	.086	.188	2.272	.025
	EIA	**.191**	.078	.220	2.439	.017
	SMI	**.260**	.094	.181	2.774	.007
	FSC	**.093**	.058	.089	1.594	.114
	PAC	**.224**	.090	.215	2.494	.014
	PFF	**.232**	.066	.259	3.495	.001

The regression equation was constructed using unstandardized coefficients, as these represent the actual change in IASHC per unit change in each predictor.
The resulting model is:

$$Y = -1.049 + 0.196\,X_1 + 0.191\,X_2 + 0.260\,X_3 + 0.093\,X_4 + 0.224\,X_5 + 0.232\,X_6$$

(Y =IASHC, X_1 =PFV, X_2 =EIA, X_3 =SMI, X_4 = FSC, X_5 =PAC and X_6 = PFF).

The regression analysis showed that five of the six hypotheses were supported. PFV ($\beta = .188$, $p = .025$), EIA ($\beta = .220$, $p = .017$), SMI ($\beta = .181$, $p = .007$), PAC ($\beta = .215$, $p = .014$), and PFF)($\beta = .259$, $p = .001$) all had significant positive effects on IASHC, thereby supporting H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6. FSC (H4) was not significant ($\beta = .089$, $p = .114$).

Interpreting the unstandardized coefficients (B), a one-unit increase in PFV corresponds to a 0.196-unit increase in IASHC; a one-unit increase in EIA increases IASHC by 0.191 units; SMI by 0.260 units; PAC by 0.224 units; and PFF by 0.232 units. FSC did not yield a statistically meaningful change in IASHC.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The survey data was free from missing values and outliers. Descriptive statistics highlighted a predominantly well-educated Gen Z sample with moderate income and strong interest in sustainable fashion alternatives, especially SHC. Reliability and validity tests showed that most constructs achieved acceptable to good consistency, while preliminary checks confirmed normality, linearity, and no major multicollinearity issues. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between the IASHC and five of the IVs, and regression results confirmed that PFV, EIA, SMI, PAC, and PFF significantly predicted IASHC, with EIA as the strongest driver, while FSC was not significant. The overall model was statistically robust, explaining about 71% of the variance in intention and substantiating five out of six hypotheses.

5 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and interprets the findings of the study, integrating the results of statistical analyses with the research objectives and hypotheses. First, a summary of the demographic characteristics and conceptual variables is provided. Next, the results of hypothesis testing are provided. The findings are then compared and contrasted with existing literature to assess whether they support or challenge prior research, thereby situating the results within the broader academic discourse. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the results.

5.1 Summary and Discussion on Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics

Summary

The demographic analysis revealed a slightly female-dominant sample (55%), primarily aged 21–26 (74%), characterized by high education levels (80% with a bachelor's degree or higher) and moderate income (€1,000–1,499 for 60%). Occupation-wise, 40% were students, 35% employed, 20% unemployed, and 5% self-employed. Considering the fashion preferences and consumption behaviors, clothing expenditure patterns reflected budget-consciousness, with 77% spending less than €100 per month. Moreover, 64% reported that sustainability concerns influenced their clothing choices at least somewhat, fast fashion consumption remained common, with 55% buying it occasionally and 21% buying it often or very often. With regards to social media exposure, 35% respondents followed mainly fast fashion content, 20% mainly second-hand fashion content, 30% both, and 15% who do not follow social media fashion content. Looking ahead, SHC (32%) and ethical/sustainable brands (20%) emerged as the preferred future clothing options, though fast fashion (18%) still retained relevance.

Discussion

To contextualize these demographic findings, they were compared with prior studies. The UK-based study by Hur (2020, p.10), involving 134 consumers and 138 non-SHC consumers, revealed that the majority of second-hand shoppers were female, belonging to the age category of 25–44 years. Further, around 60% of respondents were in full-time or part-time employment. Similar to the research findings, Hur also found a female-dominant sample. This consistency across contexts highlighted that women are typically more engaged in second-hand fashion consumption. However, the underlying reasons for this trend require further investigation, as they were not explicitly addressed in the compared studies. The research and Hur's findings showed that SHC appeals to a wide range of young to middle-aged adults. While, as per the research majority of the respondents were students, as per Hur´s study majority of secondhand clothing shoppers were employed respondents. This suggested that in the UK, SHC attracted more working adults, while in Finland, younger, highly educated students and early professionals dominated, showing contextual differences. Similar to Finnish Gen Z, Hur’s (2020, p.10) UK sample also represented middle-income earners (£20,000–50,000 income households). Both cases underline affordability as a key driver of SHC adoption.

Complementing Hur’s findings, the Romanian study by Corboș et al. (2023, p.1071-1073) with 110 respondents also emphasized the strong presence of younger consumers (50% aged 18–24) in SHC adoption, aligning closely with the Finnish Gen Z sample. Romanian segmentation revealed that urban youth were the most active adopters (83.63% urban), echoing the digital and social media-driven fashion exposure observed among Finnish Gen Z. Together, these results highlight that SHC consumption thrives among urban, young, and budget-conscious groups, though shaped differently by socio-economic contexts and by varying sampling approaches.

In line with the classic gap shown by research data (64% say sustainability influences them, yet 76% still buy fast fashion at least occasionally), previous research also proved that environmental concern reliably lifted intentions for SHC and notable interest in clothing rental, upcycling variants, but did not fully displace fast-fashion buying. According to Oscario (2023, p1.1), Indonesian Gen Z revealed that SHC, once stigmatized as a marker of poverty, has been socially reconstructed into a popular sustainable lifestyle largely through social media influence. Importantly, social media influencers played a critical role in shaping perceptions, presenting SHC as trendy, fun, and aspirational rather than a necessity born of economic hardship.

5.2 Summary and Discussion on Conceptual Variables

Summary

Considering the analysis of conceptual variables, the mean scores for all the variables were above the neutral midpoint of 3, indicating overall agreement among respondents. Perceived Functional Value (PFV) had the highest mean score of M = 4.72, SD = 0.494 for the quality aspect of SHC, reflecting confidence in the durability and quality of SHC. Emotional and Identity Alignment (EIA) scored the highest mean score of M = 4.51, SD = 0.577 for being happy when wearing SHC, showing that second-hand fashion resonates positively with emotions and self-identity. Social Media and Influencer Impact (SMI) was moderately strong, with the highest mean (M = 4.46, SD = 0.610) for following influencer recommendations. Fear of Social Criticism (FSC) was also evident, particularly concerned about being socially unacceptable for purchasing fast fashion (M = 4.49, SD = 0.659). Perceived Access and Convenience (PAC) received the highest mean score for visibility and product display (M = 4.66, SD = 0.572), underlining the importance of store accessibility and transparency. Perceived Financial Feasibility (PFF) showed that affordability is key, with the highest mean (M = 4.22, SD = 0.524) for good value relative to price, although some variability suggested uncertainty over consistent affordability. Finally, the DV indicated a positive outlook. The highest mean was for planning to purchase second-hand clothes (M = 4.25, SD = 0.520), suggesting strong intentions toward sustainable choices.

Considering the results of hypothesis testing, it was revealed that five of the IVs of PFV, EIA, SMI, PAC, and PFF had a significant positive impact on consumer IASHC. In contrast, FSC did not have a significant positive impact on Intention to Adopt Second-Hand Clothing (IASHC).

Discussion

H1 - There is a significant positive impact of PFV on Finnish Gen Z consumers´ IASHC.

As per the regression analysis, the beta value for the PFV variable was 0.196, and the p-value was 0.025. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, there was a significant positive impact of the variable on the IASHC. Furthermore, for every 1-unit increase in the variable, IASHC would increase by 0.19 units.

In Herjanto et al. (2023, p.7), the study of Gen Z's SHC intentions, functional value items (quality, durability, utility) showed high factor loadings (>0.7) and contributed significantly to intention within the TPB framework. Prisco et al. (2025, p.6): Among 428 Gen Z respondents in Italy, functional value had a direct positive effect on second-hand purchase intention, reinforcing its predictive role across contexts. Complementing these results, Hur (2020, p.1), in a UK study, found that functional value, particularly quality, fitness, utility, styling, and financial fairness, was the most frequently cited driver of SHC adoption, while non-consumers emphasized poor quality and cleanliness as barriers. This evidence underscores that across different contexts (US, Italy, UK), functional value remains one of the most reliable predictors of Gen Z's SHC intentions, supporting the present study's finding that a one-unit increase in PFV significantly increased IASHC among Finnish Gen Z consumers.

H2 - There is a significant positive impact of EIA on Finnish Gen Z consumers´ IASHC

According to the regression analysis, the coefficient for EIA was β = 0.191 with a p-value of 0.017. Since the p-value was below the 0.05 threshold, this indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between EIA and IASHC. The findings imply that for every one-unit increase in EIA, consumer IASHC rose by approximately 0.19 units.

The findings of the study associated with higher emotional and value alignment encouraged IASHC, which is in line with the findings of Koay et al. (2024) concerning 500 Malaysian respondents who have purchased SHC before. According to Koay et al. (2024), "Consumers with higher moral norms are more likely to understand the consequences of their actions and feel a greater responsibility toward the environment, which can lead to guilt when not purchasing second-hand clothing" (p.510). This is also consistent with Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015, p.58), who showed that second-hand items hold strong symbolic and identity-related meanings for consumers. Their findings emphasized that authenticity and the "spirit of the past" were consciously valued. However, while EIA often strengthens intention, research also highlights situations where it becomes a barrier. Frahm et al. (2025, p.661) identified "identity discrepancy" as a challenge, showing that not all consumers perceived second-hand fashion as compatible with their self-concept. Moreover, persistent barriers such as social stigma and hygiene concerns can outweigh these positive motives, limiting actual adoption despite favorable attitudes.

H3 - There is a significant positive impact of SMI on Finnish Gen Z consumers´ IASHC.

According to the regression analysis, the coefficient for SMI was $\beta = 0.260$ with a p-value of 0.007. Since the p-value was below the 0.05 threshold, this indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between the variables. The findings implied that for every one-unit increase in SMI , IASHC over fast fashion rose by approximately 0.26 units.

This aligns with prior findings. For instance, Ge (2024) reported through PLS-SEM analysis that influencers significantly affect Gen Z's sustainable fashion consumption, as their trust in influencers positively mediates purchase intentions. Evidence from Mobarak et al. (2025) further emphasized this effect, noting that the majority of respondents reported being influenced by social media platforms in their decision to try thrift fashion, highlighting its normalization among young consumers (p. 7). However, not all studies point to a universally positive effect. Some caution that influencer impact can be context-specific and uneven. For example, Ge (2024) noted that overreliance on influencer endorsements without authenticity reduced trust levels, weakening the impact on purchase intention. These findings indicated that while influencers and social media are powerful tools to promote second-hand adoption, their effect was maximized when coupled with authenticity and reinforced by value-driven motives.

H4 - There is no significant positive impact of FSC on Finnish Gen Z consumers´ IASHC.

Since the p-value was greater than the 0.05 threshold, this indicated that FSC did not have a statistically significant positive impact on IASHC.

Gurova (2024) observed that second-hand consumption has become normalized among young people and is “not a matter of shame or embarrassment” (p. 297). At the same time, she noted that “some young people experienced bullying for shopping at fast fashion brands” (p. 297), which suggested that social criticism in Finland is increasingly directed at fast fashion rather than second-hand fashion. However, the research findings proved otherwise. Although social pressure and fear of judgment are often theorized to influence sustainable consumption, empirical findings suggest their impact is inconsistent. As per Koay et al. (2024), even though consumers are aware of the environmental consequences of fast fashion, consumers are actually not purchasing SHC because of social discomfort associated with it, due to such clothes often being associated with poor people, and peer pressure does not significantly affect purchase intention, confirming it is not always a strong motivator.

H5 - There is a significant positive impact of PAC on Finnish Gen Z consumers´ IASHC.

According to the regression analysis, PAC had a significant positive effect on Finnish Gen Z’s IASHC ($\beta = 0.224$, $p = 0.014$). This means that easier access to SHC options and greater shopping convenience are associated with stronger behavioral intentions to consume second-hand clothes.

This finding is consistent with Prisco et al. (2025), whose Italian Gen Z sample showed that convenience factors contributed to a strong model fit. Mobarak et al. (2025) found that thrift adoption was linked to ease of access, with participants reporting that the expansion of online platforms and second-hand apps facilitated convenience, directly boosted purchase intentions. However, contrasting evidence from Evanilay et al. (2024) revealed that greater availability of sustainable fashion was paradoxically linked to continuing fast fashion use, suggesting that convenience alone does not guarantee reduced fast fashion reliance and may interact with other motivators such as trend and affordability.

H6 - There is a significant positive impact of PFF on Finnish Gen Z consumers′ IASHC.

The regression analysis showed that PFF significantly predicted Finnish Gen Z's IASHC (β = 0.232, p = 0.001). This indicates that affordability and cost savings play a decisive role, with every one unit increase in financial feasibility raising intention by 0.23 units.

This result is consistent with Prisco et al. (2025, p.9), who found that price value significantly predicted second-hand purchase intention among Italian Gen Z, with their PLS-SEM model. Supporting this, Hur (2020, p.21) highlighted affordability and financial fairness as influential values encouraging adoption, while Mobarak et al. (2025) emphasized that respondents described economic feasibility as a decisive factor in choosing thrift fashion. In contrast, Evanilay et al. (2024) found that fashion trends (β = 0.735, p = 0.000) and functionality (β = –0.194, p = 0.000) outweighed affordability in Indonesia, suggesting that while financial feasibility is important, its influence is shaped by cultural and market contexts. Collectively, these findings reinforce that financial feasibility is a robust and statistically validated driver of SHC adoption, though its relative weight may vary depending on the interplay of fashion trends, functionality, and cultural expectations.

5.3 Chapter Summary

The demographic profile showed that Finnish Gen Z respondents were mainly young, female, and highly educated, with modest incomes and budget-conscious spending habits, echoing patterns found in earlier studies from the UK and Romania. Analysis of the conceptual variables confirmed that PFV, EIA, SMI, PAC, and PFF all significantly shaped IASHC, whereas FSC did not. Overall, the results reinforced that Finnish Gen Z are open to second-hand fashion when it aligns with quality, affordability, accessibility, and personal values, but lingering cultural and social factors still complicate full adoption.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter presents the key conclusions drawn from the research findings and discusses their theoretical and practical implications. It revisits the research question and objectives and summarizes how the study has addressed those objectives. Furthermore, the chapter outlines actionable recommendations for circular fashion brands, retailers, and policymakers to accelerate SHC adoption among Gen Z consumers in Finland. Finally, the chapter identifies areas for future research.

6.1 Research Conclusions

The female-dominated sample implies higher engagement of women in second-hand fashion communities. The dominant age cluster of 24–26 years reflects mid–late university or early-career life stages that often heighten price sensitivity and openness to circular options. The relatively high education levels suggest strong exposure to sustainability discourse and digital literacy that can increase discovery and evaluation of second-hand offers. Most respondents were students (40%) or employed (35%), with modest monthly incomes (60% for €1,000–1,499) and clear budget limits, as 77% reported spending under €100 on clothing. Social media was influential, with 65% following fashion content, mainly fast fashion (35%), or second-hand (20%). Looking ahead, second-hand (32%) and ethical/sustainable brands (20%) were the top future preferences, though fast fashion (18%) still retains some relevance.

Reliability analysis indicated strong internal consistency for most constructs: PFV, EIA, and PFF were rated “good,” while PAC, FSC, and IASHC were “acceptable.” Only SMI scored lower reliability (“questionable”). Validity tests confirmed adequacy, with KMO values ranging from 0.710 to 0.864, all significant at $p < 0.001$. Factor loadings exceeded .70 for nearly all items, proving construct validity, with the exception that SMI split into two dimensions.

Key assumptions were tested (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and correlation) to ensure that the dataset was suitable for regression analysis. Considering tests of normality, Histograms and Q-Q plots showed all variables were approximately normal, with only minor skewness in PFV (–1.559) and PAC (–1.140), and slightly elevated kurtosis for PFV (2.762). Overall, all constructs were acceptable for regression. Then, regarding linearity testing, Scatterplots indicated that all IVs had linear relationships with the DV, meeting the assumption of linearity. Moreover, multicollinearity testing showed no severe multicollinearity, as all values remained below the threshold; VIF and tolerance values confirmed this. Finally, under correlation analysis, strong and significant correlations were found for PFV (.685), EIA (.735), SMI (.549), PAC (.704), and PFF (.655), while FSC showed only a weak, insignificant correlation (.150).

Regression analysis confirmed that all factors except FSC had significantly and positively influenced IASHC, and all the IVs collectively explained 71% of the variation of the DV, and the overall model was statistically significant. Collectively, the findings underscore that Finnish Gen Z's IASHC is shaped more by perceived benefits and practical enablers than by social pressure, reflecting a generational shift toward sustainable consumption grounded in value, identity, and accessibility.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions, Managerial Implications, and Recommendations

Theoretical Contributions

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study makes a notable contribution to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) by contextualizing it within the climate-conscious fashion consumption behavior of Gen Z in the Finland context. While TPB has been widely used to understand consumer behavior, this research extends the model by introducing context-specific constructs such as PFV, EIA, SMI, FSC, PAC, and PFF, which are uniquely relevant to the fashion consumption patterns of Gen Z. By empirically testing these factors under the three pillars of the TPB, the study enhances the explanatory power of TPB in a high-consumption, trend-driven domain like fashion. Hence, identified that attitudinal (PFV, EIA) and control-related (PAC, PFF) factors exert a stronger influence on intention than subjective norms (FSC), which were found to be statistically insignificant. This finding offers empirical evidence of the value–action gap, wherein sustainability-oriented attitudes do not always translate into behavioral intention and actions when social or structural barriers persist.

Additionally, the findings also facilitate the integration of Practice Theory (Shove et al., 2012 - explains behavior as the outcome of the interaction between materials (resources and infrastructure), meanings (social and symbolic significance), and competences (skills and knowledge) that shape and sustain everyday practices) as a second theoretical lens that complements TPB by acknowledging the role of everyday practices and structural conditions in sustaining behavior. This dual-framework approach enriches theoretical understanding of why sustainable fashion practices often fail to materialize. It reveals that not only are the presence of attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral controls prerequisites to address intention to behave in a specific way, but to ensure the sustenance of a behavior, consumers need to make such behavior a practice; it is important to have structural conditions such as accessibility, social acceptability, and availability of style or sizing. By combining TPB's cognitive depth with Practice Theory's behavioral realism, the study offers a more holistic and nuanced model of sustainable fashion consumption among Gen Z.

Lastly, this research contributes to an underexplored regional context by applying these frameworks specifically to Finnish Gen Z consumers, a demographic often considered environmentally progressive. Hence, this study highlights the cultural and generational complexities in behavior change models. The findings thus open avenues for refining sustainability theories to be more culturally responsive and behaviorally grounded.

Managerial Implications and Strategic Recommendations

The results of this study provide important insights into why the value–action gap persists among Finnish Gen Z consumers. Although many respondents expressed strong sustainability values and generally favorable attitudes toward SHC, these values do not consistently translate into behavior unless supported by practical enablers such as convenience, favorable social influence, and identity alignment. This helps explain why fast-fashion consumption continues despite high environmental awareness, reinforcing the existence of the value–action gap identified in earlier research. Moreover, these findings are highly relevant for second-hand businesses and policymakers aiming to accelerate Gen Z's shift from fast fashion to SHC.

Firstly, functional and aesthetic quality must be central to value propositions. Many Gen Z consumers still perceive second-hand fashion as inferior in terms of cleanliness, hygiene, and durability (Hur, 2020, p.25). To address this, as per Tymoshchuk et al. (2024, p.14), businesses should invest in product quality enhancement, garment refurbishment, and quality assurance measures to reshape perceptions of SHC as stylish, clean, and durable.

Secondly, secondhand stores must reposition second-hand fashion not just as another sustainable alternative for fast fashion, but as a trendy and expressive lifestyle option. Innovative digital platforms can provide style guides, virtual try-ons, and storytelling around pre-loved garments, reinforcing emotional value (Wang & Jiang, 2024, p.3). Further, since Gen Z is heavily influenced by emotional value, strategies emphasizing the unique value and social symbolism of secondhand fashion should be implemented. Collaborations with influencers and micro-celebrities, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, can reinforce second-hand fashion as aspirational and socially rewarded. Further, user reviews, influencer testimonials, and peer-to-peer content can serve to build trust and normalize SHC as mainstream fashion. (Prisco et al., 2025, p.8.)

Third, accessibility and convenience must be improved across both digital and physical channels. Some people may be aware of the secondhand fashion stores but may not be aware of where to find them. So, stores could resort to omnichannel distribution methods via physical stores as well as online platforms to enhance the visibility and accessibility of secondhand fashion (Nielsen Consumer LLC, 2024). Additionally, features such as easy returns, size filters, and mobile usability reduce friction in the consumer journey, addressing key barriers in online fashion shopping (Nestler, et al., 2021). For many Gen Z consumers, a poor or clunky user experience is a deal-breaker. Therefore, it is recommended that businesses prioritize investments in frictionless digital ecosystems that mirror the speed and convenience of fast fashion platforms (Harantová & Mazanec, 2025)

Fourth, in terms of financial feasibility, secondhand fashion should be more affordable than fast fashion or else the perceived value of expensive secondhand fashion items should be high. Gen Z values price competitiveness but is also willing to pay slightly more if consumption aligns with their values (Koay et al., 2024, p.3). Therefore, as per Moitra et al. (2025; Koay et al., 2024), businesses should emphasize the value of secondhand fashion. communicate cost-per-wear and durability metrics to demonstrate long-term savings and value. Moreover, to promote and attract consumers to secondhand fashion, it is possible to give student discounts, loyalty programs, or trade-in credits.

Lastly, from a policy and education standpoint, public stakeholders should invest in awareness campaigns, school curriculum content, and media collaborations that highlight the environmental costs of fast fashion and the benefits of circular alternatives. Government support for clothing take-back infrastructure, grants for resale start-ups, and green innovation funding can enhance system-wide adoption. (Seo & Jin, 2024; Härri et al., 2024.)

Moreover, in a country like Finland, where sustainability and entrepreneurial innovation are given high priority, the findings of this study underscore a significant opportunity for international business and circular fashion startups. Hence, as per Härri et al. (2024; Ostermann et al., 2021), foreign businesses could expand their businesses in Finland, especially circular initiatives like secondhand shops, by localizing their offerings, tapping into Finland's strong digital infrastructure, and aligning with cultural expectations of transparency, ethics, and low-waste living. Similarly, Finnish circular startups can expand internationally by exporting their best practices in take-back schemes, resale logistics, or second-hand tech integrations. Thus, it is evident that the research reinforces that circular fashion is not just a local sustainability solution, but a scalable international business opportunity, especially when built on the attitudinal, subjective, and behavioral drivers of Gen Z consumer behavior.

6.3 Areas for Future Research

Although this study provides valuable insights into Gen Z's IASHC in Finland, several avenues remain open for future research.

This study focused solely on Gen Z. Future work could include Millennials, who often have higher purchasing power but different value priorities, and may display different priorities regarding sustainability and affordability (Gehlot et al., 2025). In contrast, Generation Alpha, who are still forming their consumption values, could reveal early impressions of sustainable fashion shaped by digital culture and education (Höfrová et al., 2024). Comparing generational cohorts would help determine whether second-hand adoption is a life-stage phenomenon restricted by income conditions and educational levels or a generational shift in consumer behavior driven by emerging norms about sustainability. Further, the findings are limited to Finnish consumers, a group widely regarded as environmentally progressive. Therefore, future research should extend to diverse cultural and economic contexts, such as across Nordic, Southern European, and Asian markets, since existing cross-national studies already show that sustainable and second-hand fashion adoption varies substantially between countries due to cultural norms, fashion systems, and differences in circular economy development (Koszewska, Rahman, & Dyczewski, 2020; Xu, Chen et al, 2014). Such analysis is vital because Finland's advanced circular systems may drive adoption patterns not yet seen elsewhere. Hence, it is evident that cross-cultural comparisons would help determine whether the identified drivers, like functional value and emotional alignment, are universal or specific to sustainability-oriented contexts like Finland.

Moreover, the cross-sectional design offers only a snapshot. Future studies should follow consumers over several years to observe whether intentions lead to sustained behavioral change as circular fashion becomes more mainstream. This approach would also capture how life events such as graduation, employment, or income growth reshape sustainable fashion choices (Prisco et al. 2025). Methodologically, longitudinal designs are the appropriate way to study change in attitudes and behavior across time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the reliability results suggested that SMI may not be a single-dimensional construct. As per Ge (2024), future studies could distinguish between influencer-driven aspirational influence and peer-driven normative influence to improve measurement clarity. Similarly, FSC was non-significant, which may indicate that stigma has shifted toward fast fashion rather than second-hand clothing. As Herjanto et al. (2023) observe, Gen Z consumers increasingly associate social disapproval with environmentally harmful consumption rather than with buying pre-owned garments. Testing FSC with more nuanced items could clarify its evolving role. Refining these constructs would enhance theoretical precision and improve the predictive validity of behavioral models examining sustainable fashion adoption.

Future studies could test additional factors beyond those examined here. Variables such as environmental concern, sustainability knowledge, trust in resale platforms, perceived authenticity, materialism, and fashion innovativeness may offer richer explanations of adoption behavior. Including these factors could strengthen the predictive power of behavioral models and highlight overlooked motivations or barriers. Furthermore, this research was based on TPB but combining it with other frameworks could provide complementary insights. Sheth's Consumption Value Theory could capture conditional and epistemic values (Sheth et al., 1991, adapted from Koay et al., 2024, p.11), and the Value-Belief-Norm model could address moral and normative pressures (Müller et al., 2021). Integrating these perspectives would provide a more holistic theoretical basis for understanding sustainable fashion consumption.

The current study relied on survey data and regression analysis, which, while effective for identifying associations, cannot establish causality. Therefore, future research could employ experiments to test the causal effects of interventions such as pricing strategies and influencer endorsements on sustainable fashion adoption. Moreover, as per Sekaran and Bougie (2016), qualitative methods such as interviews or ethnography could provide a deeper understanding of symbolic meanings, identity expression, and emotional drivers linked to second-hand clothing. Tran (2022) demonstrated that combining quantitative and qualitative data yields a richer understanding of emotional and social factors driving Gen Z's engagement with eco-fashion. Thus, combining methods would yield a richer picture of both intention and practice. According to prior research, more research is needed on how circular entrepreneurs and policymakers can work together to make sustainable fashion competitive with fast fashion. This could involve studying business model innovations such as subscription rentals, trade-in credits, or peer-to-peer exchanges, as well as policy instruments like eco-taxes, subsidies, or school-based sustainability education, which have been identified as emerging mechanisms for extending product lifecycles and fostering circularity in fashion (Priyadharshini et al., 2024; Ostermann et al., 2021). Finland provides fertile ground for such research, given its strong policy support and digital infrastructure. Exploring this topic in other markets could show how different policy settings and business approaches work together to speed up the global shift toward circular fashion.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter concluded that Finnish Gen Z's adoption of second-hand clothing is mainly driven by perceived quality, emotional value, accessibility, affordability, and social media influence, while fear of social criticism was less relevant. The study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior with context-specific constructs, offering a more complete explanation of the value–action gap in sustainable fashion.

Managerially, the findings stress the need for businesses to improve product quality, strengthen emotional branding, ensure affordability, expand accessibility, and use influencer engagement, while policymakers should support awareness, education, and circular infrastructure. Future research is encouraged to broaden demographics and contexts, adopt longitudinal and mixed methods, refine constructs, and explore policy and entrepreneurial strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Operationalization of Research Problem

Table 20. Operationalization of the Research Problem (Author´s Compilation)

Sub-Problems	Theoretical Framework	Main concepts/ themes	Analysis themes	Results/ Findings
1. To what extent do Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward SHC influence their IASHC?	TPB – Attitude component	PFV, EIA	Product quality, self-concept relevance, sustainability value	Expected to have a statistically significant and positive impact on IASHC.
2. To what extent do Gen Z consumers' subjective norms toward SHC influence their IASHC?	TPB – Subjective norm	SMI, FSC	Trend influence, online visibility, group identity pressure	Expected to have a statistically significant and positive impact on IASHC.
3. To what extent do Gen Z consumers' behavioral control toward SHC influence their IASHC?	TPB – Perceived behavioral control	PAC, PFF	Accessibility, price perception, digital availability	Expected to have a statistically significant and positive impact on IASHC.
4. What practical implications follow for circular fashion branding/retail given these behavioral drivers?	TPB application to branding and consumer strategy	Branding strategies, communication tools, and alignment with Gen Z climate values	Strategic alignment, messaging, and pricing policies	Findings are expected to inform actionable branding and marketing strategies that reflect Gen Z values and enhance circular apparel competitiveness.

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

Questionnaire in English

Title:

Understanding young consumers’ fashion choices: Fast fashion and second-hand clothing among Finnish Gen Z.

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of a Master's thesis conducted by Chathushka Galhena, a student at LUT University. This study investigates the attitudinal, social, and behavioral factors that influence Finnish Gen Z consumers’ (1997 to 2012) clothing consumption choices, with a focus on second-hand fashion as an alternative to fast fashion.

To participate, you must:

- Be aged 18–28
- Currently reside in Finland
- Regularly or occasionally, shop from fast fashion brands (Purchased at least one item from a fast fashion brand (e.g., H&M, Zara) within the past 6 months)

The questionnaire takes approximately 8 to 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous, and all responses will be used strictly for academic research purposes only.

Thank you for your time and valuable input!

What is Fast Fashion and Secondhand Fashion?

- Fast fashion refers to the rapid production of trendy, affordable clothing to keep up with changing consumer demand (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Liu et al., 2021). E.g., Zara, H&M, and Topshop

- Second-hand fashion is the resale of pre-owned garments, extending clothing life and reducing waste (Kim, 2021). Eg., Vilma's Second Hand, Kierrätyskeskus, UFF, Relove, Punavuoren Patina, SPR Kontti, HyötyHalli

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-binary / Third gender

☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

☐ 18–20

☐ 21–23

☐ 24–26

☐ 27–28

3. What is your monthly income level?

☐ Less than €500

☐ €500 – €999

☐ €1,000 – €1,499

☐ €1,500 – €1,999

☐ €2,000 or more

4. What is your highest completed level of education?

☐ Secondary school or less

☐ Vocational qualification

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree or higher

☐ Other (please specify): ___________

5. What is your main occupation?

☐ Student

☐ Employed (full-time or part-time)

☐ Self-employed

☐ Unemployed

6. Approximately how much do you spend on clothing per month?

☐ Less than €30

☐ €30–€60

☐ €60–€100

☐ €100–€150

☐ More than €150

7. To what extent does environmental or sustainability concerns influence your clothing choices?

☐ Not at all

☐ A little

☐ Somewhat

☐ A lot

☐ A great deal

8. How often do you purchase clothing from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara, etc.)?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Occasionally (once every few months)

☐ Often (at least once a month)

☐ Very often (multiple times a month)

9. Do you follow any fashion-related content on social media (e.g., influencers, brand pages, second-hand fashion accounts)?

☐ No, I don't follow any fashion-related content

☐ Yes, mostly fast fashion content

☐ Yes, mostly second-hand/circular fashion content

☐ Yes, a mix of both equally

☐ Yes, other types of fashion content

10. Which of the following clothing options do you prefer or expect to purchase most often in the future?

☐ Fast fashion

☐ Second-hand clothing

☐ Clothing rental (short-term use of garments for everyday or special occasions)

☐ Ethical/sustainable brands (eco-friendly materials and fair labor practices)

☐ Clothing swaps (exchanging garments with others)

☐ Upcycled clothing (redesigned from old textiles)

☐ Recycled-material clothing (made from recovered fibres or fabrics)

☐ Made-to-order/slow fashion (durable, small-batch, or custom-made garments)

Section 2: Your Opinions on Second-Hand Fashion as an Alternative to Fast Fashion

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your thoughts on second-hand fashion, even if you do not currently buy second-hand clothing.
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

PFV1: I believe second-hand clothing is of equal or higher quality compared to new clothing.
PFV2: I believe second-hand clothing is free from hidden defects.
PFV3: I believe second-hand clothing is clean and hygienic.
PFV4: I believe second-hand clothing can be fashionable and trendy.
PFV5: I believe I can easily find my size in second-hand clothing.

EIA1: I feel happy when I wear second-hand clothing.
EIA2: Purchasing second-hand clothing makes me feel good.
EIA3: Purchasing second-hand clothing helps me relieve stress
EIA4: Second-hand clothing provides joy and pleasure
EIA5: Choosing second-hand clothing would help me act on my ethical values.

SMI1: I would like to watch influencers' experiences on their channels regarding second-hand clothing purchases.
SMI2: I would like to imitate influencers' behaviors towards buying second-hand clothing, as I feel as if I am part of their group.
SMI3: I would purchase second-hand clothing promoted by an influencer in the future.
SMI4: I would follow product recommendations from influencers about second-hand clothing.
SMI5: I would encourage people close to me to buy second-hand clothing promoted by a digital influencer.

FSC1: I feel self-conscious when purchasing fast fashion clothes.
FSC2: I'm concerned that others may judge me negatively when purchasing fast fashion clothes.
FSC3: I worry that purchasing fast fashion clothes may impact me negatively.
FSC4: I worry about feeling socially unacceptable while purchasing fast fashion clothes.

FSC5: Most people who are important to me think I should use an environmentally friendly way, such as buying secondhand clothes

PAC1: I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely available stores.
PAC2: I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely accessible stores.
PAC3: I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to clear product condition and information.
PAC4: I think buying second-hand clothing is easy because products are highly visible and well displayed in stores.
PAC5: I can easily fit second-hand fashion shopping into my daily routine.

PFF1: Second-hand clothing is reasonably priced.
PFF2: Second-hand clothing offers good value for money.
PFF3: Second-hand clothing is a good product, considering the price it costs.
PFF4: Second-hand clothing is economical.
PFF5: Buying second-hand clothing is a cost-effective way to update my wardrobe.

CSI1: I intend to buy second-hand clothes.
CSI2: I plan to purchase second-hand clothes.
CSI3: I will purchase second-hand clothes in my next purchase.
CSI4: I expect second-hand clothing to replace most of my future fast fashion purchases.

Questionnaire in Finnish

Kysely suomeksi

Otsikko:

Suomalaisten Z-sukupolven muotivalinnat: Pikamuoti ja second hand -vaatteet

Johdanto

Tämä kysely on osa LUT-yliopiston maisteritutkielmaa, jonka suorittaa Chathushka Galhena. Tutkimus tarkastelee asenteellisia, sosiaalisia ja käyttäytymiseen liittyviä tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat Suomessa asuvien Z-sukupolven (1997–2012 syntyneet) vaatekulutukseen, erityisesti second hand -muotiin pikamuodin vaihtoehtona.

Osallistumisehdot:

- Olet 18–28-vuotias
- Asut tällä hetkellä Suomessa
- Olet ostanut pikamuotibrändien tuotteita säännöllisesti tai satunnaisesti (vähintään yhden ostoksen viimeisen 6 kuukauden aikana, esim. H&M, Zara)

Kyselyn täyttäminen kestää noin 8–10 minuuttia. Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista ja anonyymiä, ja vastauksia käytetään ainoastaan akateemiseen tutkimukseen.

Kiitos ajastasi ja arvokkaasta panoksestasi!

Mitä tarkoitetaan pikamuodilla ja second hand -muodilla?

Pikamuoti: Nopeasti vaihtuvia, trendikkäitä ja edullisia vaatteita tarjoava tuotantomalli (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Liu et al., 2021). Esimerkkejä: Zara, H&M, Topshop.

Second hand -muoti: Käytettyjen vaatteiden jälleenmyynti, mikä pidentää tuotteiden käyttöikää ja vähentää jätettä (Kim, 2021). Esimerkkejä: Vilma's Second Hand, Kierrätyskeskus, UFF, Relove, Punavuoren Patina, SPR Kontti, HyötyHalli.

Osa 1: Taustatiedot

1. Sukupuoli

☐ Mies

☐ Nainen

☐ Ei-binäärinen / Kolmas sukupuoli

☐ En halua sanoa

2. Ikäsi

☐ 18–20

☐ 21–23

☐ 24–26

☐ 27–28

3. Kuukausitulosi

☐ Alle 500 €

☐ 500–999 €

☐ 1 000–1 499 €

☐ 1 500–1 999 €

☐ 2 000 € tai enemmän

4. Korkein suoritettu koulutus

☐ Peruskoulu tai sitä alempi

☐ Ammatillinen koulutus

☐ Kandidaatin tutkinto

☐ Maisterin tutkinto tai korkeampi

☐ Muu (mikä?): ___________

5. Pääasiallinen toiminta

☐ Opiskelija

☐ Työllinen (osa- tai kokoaikainen)

☐ Yrittäjä

☐ Työtön

6. Kuinka paljon käytät rahaa vaatteisiin kuukaudessa?

☐ Alle 30 €

☐ 30–60 €

☐ 60–100 €

☐ 100–150 €

☐ Yli 150 €

7. Kuinka paljon ympäristö- tai kestävyysnäkökohdat vaikuttavat vaatevalintoihisi?

☐ Ei lainkaan

☐ Vähän

☐ Jonkin verran

☐ Paljon

☐ Erittäin paljon

8. Kuinka usein ostat pikamuotibrändeiltä (esim. H&M, Zara)?

☐ En koskaan

☐ Harvoin

☐ Satunnaisesti (kerran muutamassa kuukaudessa)

☐ Usein (vähintään kerran kuukaudessa)

☐ Hyvin usein (useita kertoja kuukaudessa)

9. Seuraatko muotiin liittyvää sisältöä sosiaalisessa mediassa?

☐ En seuraa muotiin liittyvää sisältöä

☐ Kyllä, pääasiassa pikamuotia

☐ Kyllä, pääasiassa second hand / kiertomuotia

☐ Kyllä, molempia yhtä paljon

☐ Kyllä, muuta muotisisältöä

10. Mitä alla olevista vaatevaihtoehdoista uskot ostavasi useimmin tulevaisuudessa?

☐ Pikamuotia

☐ Second hand -vaatteita

☐ Vaatteiden vuokraus

☐ Eettiset / kestävät brändit

☐ Vaatteiden vaihtaminen muiden kanssa

☐ Uusiksi muokatut (upcycled) vaatteet

☐ Kierrätysmateriaaleista valmistetut vaatteet

☐ Mittatilaus / slow fashion

Osa 2: Mielipiteet second hand -muodista pikamuodin vaihtoehtona

Asteikko 1–5:

1 = Täysin eri mieltä

2 = Eri mieltä

3 = Neutraali

4 = Samaa mieltä

5 = Täysin samaa mieltä

PFV – Koettu toiminnallinen arvo

PFV1: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteet ovat laadultaan yhtä hyviä tai parempia kuin uudet vaatteet.
PFV2: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteissa ei ole piileviä vikoja.
PFV3: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteet ovat puhtaita ja hygieenisiä.
PFV4: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteet voivat olla muodikkaita ja trendikkäitä.
PFV5: Uskon, että löydän helposti oman kokoni second hand -vaatteista.

EIA – Emotionaalinen ja identiteettiin liittyvä merkitys

EIA1: Tunnen oloni hyväksi käyttäessäni second hand -vaatteita.
EIA2: Second hand -vaatteiden ostaminen saa minut voimaan hyvin.
EIA3: Second hand -vaatteiden ostaminen auttaa lievittämään stressiä.
EIA4: Second hand -vaatteet tuottavat iloa ja mielihyvää.
EIA5: Second hand -vaatteiden valitseminen auttaa minua toimimaan arvojeni mukaisesti.

SMI – Sosiaalisen median ja vaikuttajien vaikutus

SMI1: Haluaisin katsoa vaikuttajien second hand -ostokokemuksia heidän kanavillaan.
SMI2: Haluaisin jäljitellä vaikuttajien käyttäytymistä second hand -vaatteiden suhteen.
SMI3: Ostaisin second hand -vaatteita, jos vaikuttaja suosittelisi niitä.
SMI4: Seuraisin vaikuttajien second hand -tuotesuosituksia.
SMI5: Kannustaisin läheisiäni ostamaan vaikuttajan suosittelemia second hand -vaatteita.

FSC – Sosiaalinen kritiikki ja paine

FSC1: Tunnen oloni epävarmaksi ostaessani pikamuotia.
FSC2: Olen huolissani, että muut arvostelevat minua pikamuodin ostamisesta.

FSC3: Olen huolissani siitä, että pikamuodin ostaminen vaikuttaa minuun negatiivisesti.
FSC4: Pelkään näyttäväni sosiaalisesti epätoivotulta ostaessani pikamuotia.
FSC5: Minulle tärkeät ihmiset ajattelevat, että minun tulisi käyttää ympäristöystävällisiä vaihtoehtoja, kuten second hand -vaatteita.

PAC – Koettu saatavuus ja helppous

PAC1: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteiden ostaminen on helppoa laajan myymälävalikoiman vuoksi.
PAC2: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteiden ostaminen on helppoa hyvän saavutettavuuden vuoksi.
PAC3: Second hand -vaatteiden kunto ja informaatio ovat yleensä selkeitä.
PAC4: Second hand -vaatteet ovat helposti löydettävissä ja hyvin esillä liikkeissä.
PAC5: Voin helposti sovittaa second hand -ostokset arkeeni.

PFF – Koettu taloudellinen kannattavuus

PFF1: Second hand -vaatteet ovat kohtuuhintaisia.
PFF2: Second hand -vaatteilla on hyvä hinta-laatusuhde.
PFF3: Second hand -vaatteet ovat hyviä tuotteita hintaan nähden.
PFF4: Second hand -vaatteet ovat taloudellinen vaihtoehto.
PFF5: Second hand -vaatteiden ostaminen on kustannustehokas tapa uudistaa vaatekaappia.

Intention – Aikomus ostaa second hand -vaatteita

CSI1: Aion ostaa second hand -vaatteita.
CSI2: Suunnittelen ostavani second hand -vaatteita.
CSI3: Aion ostaa second hand -vaatteita seuraavalla ostoskerrallani.
CSI4: Uskon, että second hand -vaatteet korvaavat suurimman osan tulevista pikamuotiostoksistani.

Appendix 3 – Operationalization Table of the Questionnaire

Table 21. Operationalization of the Items of the Questionnaire (Author´s Compilation)

Construct	Question	Reference Question and Source	Definition of the referenced construct	Scale
PFV	**PFV1:** I believe second-hand clothing is of equal or higher quality compared to new clothing.	"I worry that second hand clothes may be of lower quality compared to new clothes" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.12).	Perceived value is defined as "the overall assessment of a product's usefulness based on customers' perceptions of its attributes and what it offers (Konuk FA, 2019, adapted from Mobarak et al, 2025, p.3). Functional Risk – The possibility that a product may not perform as expected, negatively influencing perceived value (Mobarak et al, 2025, p.4). Perceived value is negatively affected by perceived risks, including functional risk. Higher PFV reflects lower functional risk, indicating consumer confidence in SHC's durability, hygiene, fit, and ability to meet daily needs. The original items from Mobarak et al. (2025) measured functional risk through negatively worded statements; however, for conceptual alignment with the present construct of PFV, these were reworded into positive statements. This ensures that all items directly capture confidence in functional performance.	5-point Likert (1–5)
	PFV2: I believe second-hand clothing is free from hidden defects.	"I worry that second hand clothes may have hidden defects" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.12).		
	PFV3: I believe second-hand clothing is clean and hygienic.	"I have concerns about hygiene and cleanliness of second-hand clothes" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.12).		
	PFV4: I believe second-hand clothing can be fashionable and trendy.	"I worry that second hand clothes might not be fashionable" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.12).		
	PFV5: I believe I can easily find my size in second-hand clothing.	"I worry about the availability of my size in second hand clothes" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.12).		
EIA	**EIA1:** I feel happy when I wear second-hand clothing.	"I feel happy when I wear this clothing" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 10).	"Emotional value is a unique subjective emotion that consumers feel about the product in the process of purchasing and using it, which, in turn, has a significant	5-point Likert (1–5)

	EIA2: Purchasing second-hand clothing makes me feel good.	"Purchasing this clothing makes me feel good" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 10).	impact on purchasing behavior" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 18). In Kim et al. (2021), "this clothing" refers to the second-hand clothing. These items are suitable for this research because positive emotional experiences often reinforce a sense of alignment between one's fashion choices and self-concept. If SHC generates feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure, it is more likely that the consumer perceives it as congruent with their values and identity. The statement by Sepe et al. (2024) captures identity alignment through ethical values, indicating that second-hand purchasing reflects the consumer's self-concept as a responsible and value-driven individual.	
	EIA3: The stress is relieved by purchasing second-hand clothing	"The stress is relieved by purchasing this clothing" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 10).		
	EIA4: Second-hand clothing provides joy and pleasure	"This clothing provides joy and pleasure" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 10).		
	EIA5: Choosing second-hand clothing would help me act on my ethical values.	"I have a moral responsibility to buy second-hand clothes when I go shopping." (Sepe et al., 2024, p. 954)		
SMI	**SMI1:** I would like to watch influencers' experiences on their channels regarding second-hand clothing purchases.	"I would like to watch influencer's experiences on her channel regarding sustainable fashion purchasing" (Ge, 2024, p. 129)	In Ge et al. (2024), the construct of influencer impact on sustainable fashion purchase decisions among Gen Z measures how influencers affect Gen Z's sustainable fashion purchase decisions through dimensions such as engagement with influencer content, perceived similarity in values, perceived expertise, positive attitudes toward influencer recommendations, and purchase intentions. Out of those sections, questions under the sections of: Influencers' sustainable fashion purchasing experiences (engagement and observational influence) and Sustainable fashion purchase intentions (behavioral intentions after exposure to influencer content) were selected as they seemed most relevant.	5-point Likert (1–5)
	SMI2: I would like to imitate influencers' behaviors towards buying second-hand clothing, as I feel as if I am part of their group.	"I would like to imitate the influencer's behaviors towards sustainable fashion, as I feel as if I am part of her group" (Ge, 2024, p. 129)		
	SMI3: I would purchase second-hand clothing promoted by an influencer in the future.	"I would purchase sustainable fashion products promoted by this influencer in the future" (Ge, 2024, p. 129)		
	SMI4: I would follow product recommendations from influencers about second-hand clothing.	"I would follow product recommendations from this influencer" (Ge, 2024, p. 129)		
	SMI5: I would encourage people close to me to buy	"I would encourage people close to me to buy the		

	second-hand clothing promoted by a digital influencer.	sustainable fashion products promoted by this digital influencer" (Ge, 2024, p. 129)		
FSC	**FSC1:** I feel self-conscious when purchasing fast fashion clothes.	"I feel self-conscious when purchasing second-hand clothes." (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.14)	In Mobarak et al. (2025), social risk refers to the possibility that a purchase decision may result in social disapproval or negative judgment from others, thereby affecting the consumer's self-image and social acceptance (p. 4). The original items measured FSC for wearing SHC. In the Finnish Gen Z context, however, social disapproval is increasingly directed toward fast fashion purchases due to growing sustainability norms. Therefore, "SHC" was replaced with "fast fashion" to ensure contextual relevance and accurately capture fear of judgment toward unsustainable choices, while preserving the construct's original intent. The final question was extracted from Prisco et al. (2025), under the construct of subjective norms, referring to the perceived social pressure to perform or refrain from a specific action. In this case, it measures the extent to which individuals believe that how important others expect them to choose environmentally friendly options, such as buying SHC. This aligns with the study's aim of understanding how social expectations influence Finnish Gen Z's clothing choices.	5-point Likert (1–5)
	FSC2: I'm concerned that others may judge me negatively when purchasing fast fashion clothes.	"I'm concerned that others may judge me negatively when purchasing second-hand clothes" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.14)		
	FSC3: I worry that purchasing fast fashion clothes may impact me negatively.	"I worry that purchasing second-hand clothes may impact me negatively" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.14)		
	FSC4: I worry about feeling socially unacceptable while purchasing fast fashion clothes.	"I worry about feeling socially unacceptable while purchasing second-hand clothes" (Mobarak et al., 2025, p.14)		
	FSC5: Most people who are important to me think I should use an environmentally friendly way, such as buying secondhand clothes	"Most people who are important to me think I should use an environmentally friendly way, such as buying secondhand clothes." (Prisco et al., 2025, p.8)		
PAC	**PAC1:** I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely available stores.	"I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely available stores." (Koay et al., 2024, p.508).	In Koay et al. (2024), control beliefs refer to the perceived factors that can facilitate or hinder performing a behavior. The selected items assess facilitators such as store availability, accessibility, clear product condition information, and high product visibility, which directly influence the ease of purchasing SHC. These were adapted for this research to measure PAC, as they capture key practical and informational conditions that make second-	5-point Likert (1–5)
	PAC2: I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely accessible stores.	"I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to the widely accessible stores." (Koay et al., 2024, p.508).		

	PAC3: I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to clear product condition and information.	"I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to clear product condition and information." (Koay et al., 2024, p.508).	hand shopping more accessible for Finnish Gen Z consumers.	
	PAC4: I think buying second-hand clothing is easy because products are highly visible and well displayed in stores.	"I think that buying second-hand clothing will be easy due to its high product visibility (display of product)" (Koay et al., 2024, p.508).		
	PAC5: I can easily fit second-hand fashion shopping into my daily routine.	Self-developed		
PFF	**PFF1:** Second-hand clothing is reasonably priced.	"Second-hand clothing is reasonably priced" (Cavazos-Arroyo & Zapata-Sánchez, 2025, p.122).	The economic value dimension refers to the perception that a product offers good value for money, is affordable, and supports effective budget management (Cavazos-Arroyo & Zapata-Sánchez, 2025). In this research, it is adapted to measure the PFF of SHC, capturing how Finnish Gen Z evaluate its affordability and cost-effectiveness compared to fast fashion. The adapted items maintain the original scale's conceptual integrity while fitting the study's context.	5-point Likert (1–5)
	PFF2: Second-hand clothing offers good value for money.	"Second-hand clothing offers good value for money" (Cavazos-Arroyo & Zapata-Sánchez, 2025, p.122).		
	PFF3: Second-hand clothing is a good product, considering the price it costs.	"Second-hand clothing is a good product, considering the price it costs" (Cavazos-Arroyo & Zapata-Sánchez, 2025, p.122).		
	PFF4: Second-hand clothing is economical.	"Second-hand clothing is economical" (Cavazos-Arroyo & Zapata-Sánchez, 2025, p.122).		
	PFF5: Buying second-hand clothing is a cost-effective way to update my wardrobe.	Self-developed		

IASHC	**CSI1:** I intend to buy second-hand clothes.	”I intend to buy second-hand clothes” (Tymoshchuk, et al., 2024, p.10).	5-point Likert (1–5)
	CSI2: I plan to purchase second-hand clothes.	“I plan to purchase second-hand clothes” (Tymoshchuk, et al., 2024, p.10).	
	CSI3: I will purchase second-hand clothes in my next purchase.	“I will purchase second-hand clothes in my next purchase” (Tymoshchuk, et al., 2024, p.10).	
	CSI4: I expect second-hand clothing to replace most of my future fast fashion purchases.	Self-developed	

Appendix 4 – Summary Tables of Data Analysis and Presentation Chapter

Appendix 4.1 - Outlier Detection

Table 22. Outlier Detection: Minimum and Maximum Values for Demographic Characteristics and General Questions (Survey Results)

Variable	Expected Range	Min	Max	Outlier	Notes
Gender	1–4	1	3	No	1=Male, 2=Female, 3=Nonbinary, 4=Prefer not to say
Age Group	1–4	1	4	No	1=18–20, 2=21–23, 3=24–26, 4=27–28
Income Level	1–5	1	5	No	From "<€500" to ">€2000"
Education Level	1–5	1	5	No	1=Secondary or less, 2=Vocational, 3=Bachelor's, 4=Master's+, 5=Other
Main Occupation	1–5	1	5	No	1=Student, 2=Employed, 3=Self-employed, 4=Unemployed, 5=Other
Monthly Spend on Clothing	1–5	1	5	No	From "<€30" to ">€150"
Sustainability Concerns on Clothing Choices	1–5	1	5	No	1=Not at all → 5=A great deal
Fast Fashion Purchase Frequency	1–5	1	5	No	1=Never → 5=Very often
Follows Fashion Content	1–4	1	4	No	1=Fast fashion, 2=Second-hand, 3=Both, 4=None
Preference for Future Clothing Options	1–8	1	8	No	1=Fast fashion, 2=SHC, 3=Clothing rental, 4=Ethical/sustainable brands, 5=Clothing swaps, 6=Upcycled clothing, 7=Recycled-material clothing, 8=Made-to-order/slow fashion

No values fell outside the predefined coding ranges for these demographic items, indicating the absence of outliers.

Figure 9. Box Plots for All Conceptual Variables (Survey Results)

All five items for PFV, EIA, FSC, PAC, and IASHC showed a highly skewed distribution to the upper end, indicating high agreement across respondents. The whiskers stretched down to 3.0 for all items, meaning the lowest responses reflected neutral attitudes. Further, there were no outliers outside the whiskers, suggesting good consistency.

For SMI, SMI2, and SMI3 showed narrow interquartile ranges, suggesting less variability in responses, whereas SMI1, SMI4, and SMI5 displayed wider ranges, showing slightly more diverse opinions, though still leaning toward agreement. No visible outliers were detected, indicating a clean dataset for this construct.

In the box plot for PFF, the narrow boxes indicated low variability, showing that most participants agreed on the items. However, the lower whiskers extending to 3.0 and several low outliers on PFF2–PFF5 suggested that some respondents were neutral or disagreed, reflecting minor concerns about the financial affordability of SHC.

Appendix 4.2 – Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Background Information

Table 23. Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Background Information (Survey Results)

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	55	55%
	Male	44	44%
	Non-binary	1	1%
	Total	100	100%
Age	18–20 years	6	6%
	21–23 years	34	34%
	24–26 years	40	40%
	27–28 years	20	20%
	Total	100	100%
Monthly Income	Less than €500	5	5%
	€500 – €999	20	20%
	€1,000 – €1,499	60	60%
	€1,500 – €1,999	10	10%
	€2,000 or more	5	5%
	Total	100	100%
Level of Education	Secondary school or less	5	5%
	Vocational qualification	15	15%
	Bachelor's degree	55	55%
	Master's degree or higher	25	25%

	Other	0	0
	Total	100	100%
Main Occupation	Student	40	40%
	Employed (full-time or part-time)	35	35%
	Self-employed	5	5%
	Unemployed	20	20%
	Total	100	100%
Monthly Expenditure on Clothing	Less than €30	35	35%
	€30–€60	42	42%
	€60–€100	19	19%
	€100–€150	3	3%
	More than €150	1	1%
	Total	100	100%
Influence of Sustainability Concerns on Clothing Choices	Not at all	10	10%
	A little	26	26%
	Somewhat	38	38%
	A lot	20	20%
	A great deal	6	6%
	Total	100	100%
Frequency of purchasing from fast fashion brands	Never	7	7%
	Rarely	17	17%
	Occasionally (once every few months)	55	55%
	Often (at least once a month)	11	11%
	Very often (multiple times a month)	10	10%
	Total	100	100%
Preference for Following Fashion-Related Content on Social Media	Yes, mainly fast fashion content	35	35%
	Yes, mainly second-hand/circular fashion content	20	20%
	Yes, both equally	30	30%
	No	15	15%
	Total	100	100%
Preference for Clothing Options to Purchase in the Future	Fast fashion	18	18%
	SHC	32	32%
	Clothing rental	6	6%
	Ethical/sustainable brands	20	20%
	Clothing swaps	5	5%
	Upcycled clothing	7	7%
	Recycled-material clothing	7	7%
	Made-to-order/slow fashion	5	5%
	Total	100	100%

Appendix 4.3 – Graphical Evaluation of Normality

Rules of Thumb for Graphical Evaluation

Histograms - A histogram provides an approximate representation of a numerical data distribution (Yang & Berdine, 2021, p.87). The distribution should resemble a bell-shaped curve. Slight deviations are acceptable, but strong flatness/peakedness may indicate non-normality.
Q–Q Plots - A Q–Q plot compares the quantiles of the sample data to those expected under a normal distribution; data points closely aligning with the 45° reference line suggest normality (Yang & Berdine, 2021, p.87). Data points should lie close to the diagonal reference line. Systematic curves or sharp bends from the diagonal suggest violations of normality.

Histograms

The graphical inspection using histograms for all constructs is presented in Figure 10.

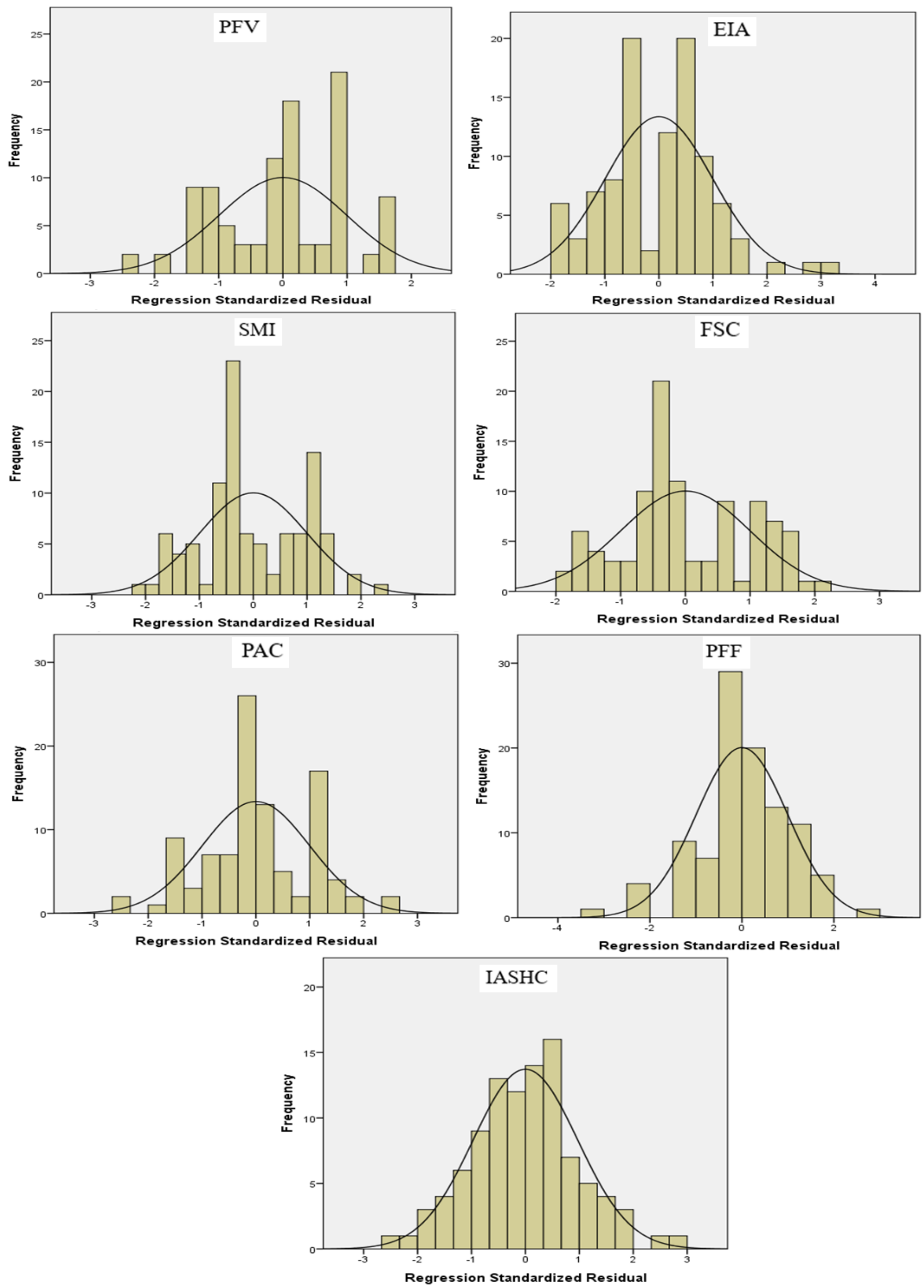

Figure 10. Histograms for all Variables (Survey Results)

The constructs generally followed a normal distribution with only minor deviations. PFV and EIA showed moderate symmetry with slight clustering around 0 and +1, while SMI displayed a near-normal pattern and within the acceptable range of –3 to +3. For FSC, the histogram aligned well with the normal curve, though minor clustering appeared near –1 and +1. Both PAC and PFF exhibited bell-shaped distributions without extreme outliers, and IASHC also demonstrated a roughly normal pattern, with most values concentrated near the mean.

Q-Q Plots

Figure 11 presents the Q–Q plots for all constructs to further evaluate the normality assumption.

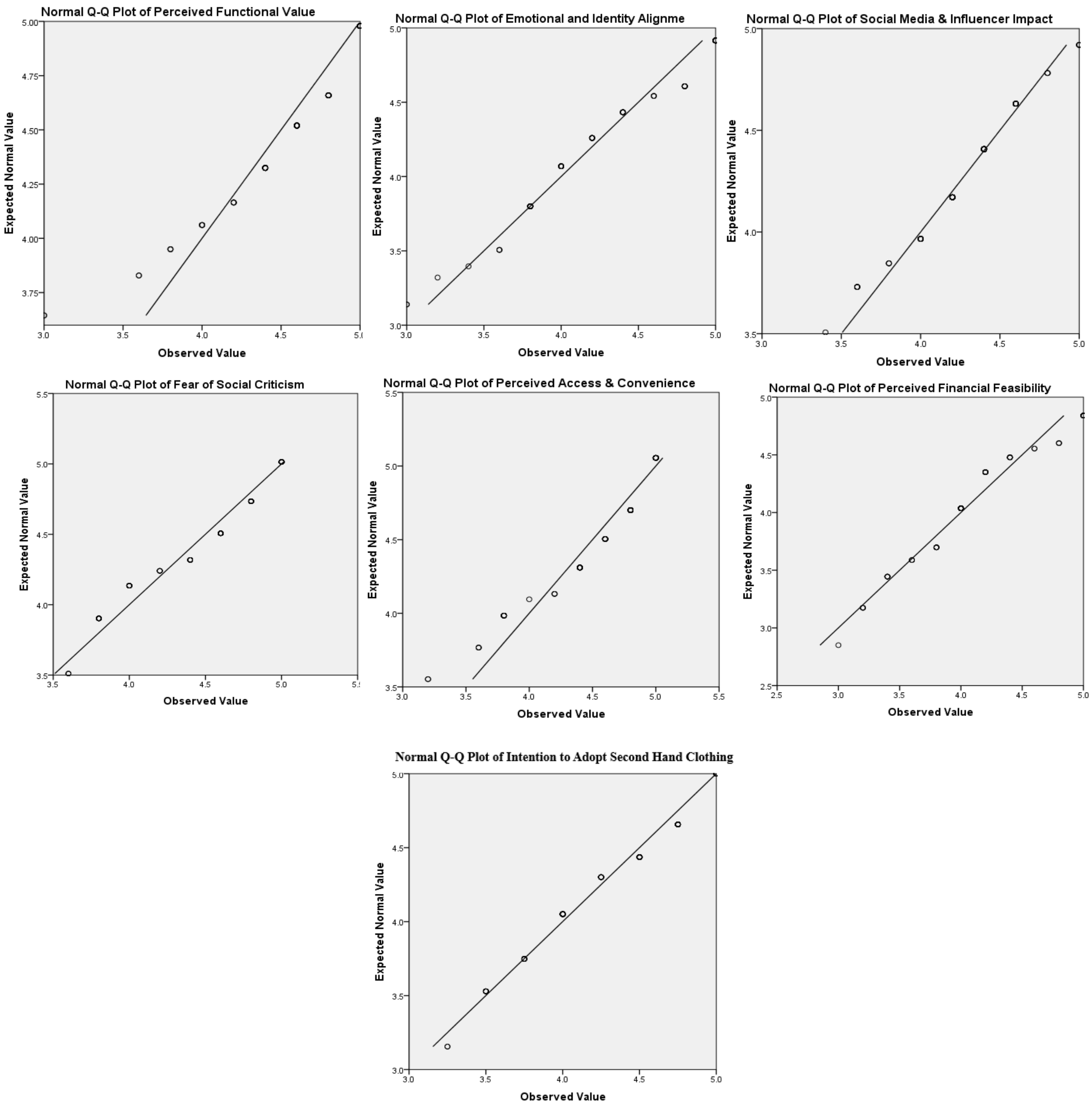

Figure 11. Q-Q Plots for all Variables (Survey Results)

The Q-Q plots for all the constructs demonstrated that the observed data points align closely with the diagonal reference line. Although minor deviations were visible at the extreme tails of certain variables, these were within acceptable limits and did not pose serious issues associated with the normality assumption. Hence, both graphical inspections and the distributional patterns suggested that the assumption of normality was sufficiently met for further statistical testing.

Appendix 4.4 – Linearity Analysis

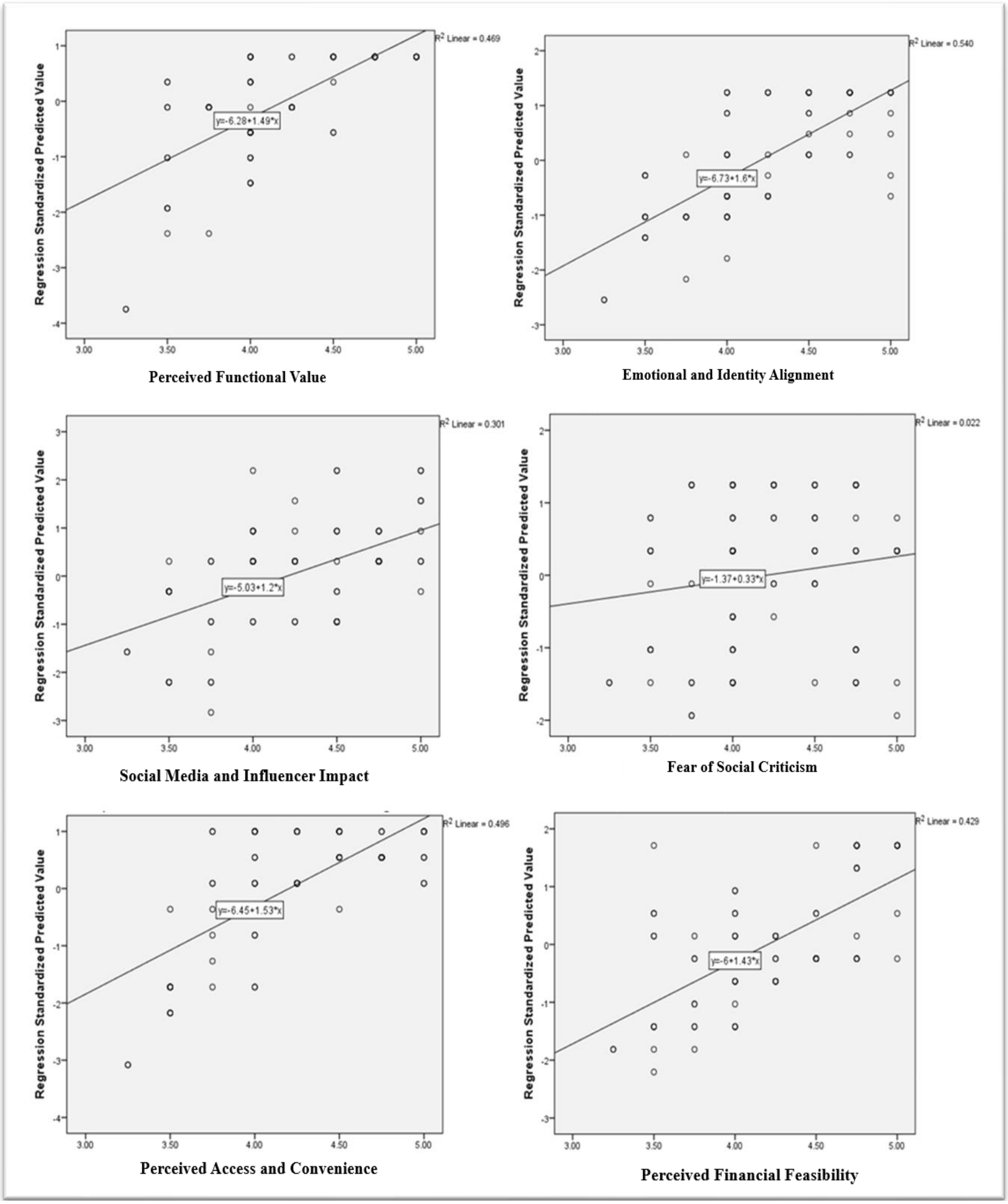

Figure 12. Scatter Plots for All Variables (Survey Results)