

## **Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Sustainable Fashion Consumption among Young Adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of sustainable fashion consumption among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Survey design was adopted for the study. The sample for the study was made up of 250 respondents who were selected using purposive and convenience sampling technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Findings show that respondents have good knowledge and a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion. They revealed that sustainable fashion supports consumers to wear and maintain their clothing (85.2%) and that second-hand clothes are more sustainable (64.8%). They selected apparel that they could wear over a longer term ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.16) and bought products packaged in recycled materials ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.56). Some young adults choose materials that quickly go out of style, indicating a gap between knowledge and practice. There was a significant relationship between knowledge and practice of sustainable fashion. This study contributes to the growing body of research on sustainable fashion consumption and provides valuable insights for policymakers, businesses, and consumers. The study concludes that there is a need for more public enlightenment programs on sustainable fashion to reinforce young adults' shift towards eco-friendly practices. It is recommended that fashion associations should align fashion businesses with sustainable goals and products. Consumers should leverage social influence to promote eco-friendly materials.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Fashion, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Eco-friendly, Consumption, Young Adult

### **Introduction**

Sustainable fashion consumption refers to the practice of making socially and environmentally responsible clothing choices while purchasing clothing items (Gupta *et al.*, 2019; Okur & Saricam, 2019). It involves opting for clothing

items that are manufactured, marketed, and used in ways that minimize environmental impact (Khandual & Pradhan, 2019). This includes selecting items made from eco-friendly materials, supporting brands with transparent and ethical production processes, and

adopting behaviours such as repairing, upcycling, or recycling garments to extend their lifespan. Sustainable fashion consumption is also referred to as ethical fashion or green fashion (Zhang, & Dong, 2020).

There is an increasing global concern for unsustainable fashion consumption as apparel and clothing items are in constant demand. The continuous production, distribution and disposal of textiles induces environmental pollution, waste and climate change (Yeoh, 2020). Fashion brands, consumers and manufacturers in developed countries are creating greater awareness of the practice of sustainable fashion. The trends in developing countries like Nigeria demand stronger advocacy for more eco-friendly textiles.

Young adults (18-26 years) are significant consumers in the fashion industry. Their purchasing decisions and attitudes towards sustainability can drive market trends and influence broader societal shifts towards sustainable practices (Watson *et al.*, 2023). Young people have been behind societal transformation being more active on social media (Stepp, 2023). Social media influenced their clothing selection and promoted new fashion trends such as clothing customisation (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2019; Diyaolu & Omisaking, 2018).

There is a need to be well-enlightened and equipped for sustainable fashion consumption in Nigeria. Knowledge of consumers about environmental issues was found to have a significant impact on clothing consumption (Kang & Kim, 2013). Understanding the environmental

impact of clothing and having a positive attitude toward sustainable practices are crucial steps in fostering change (Connell & Kozar, 2014).

The current clothing consumption habits are heading in a direction that might soon result in negative socio-economic consequences if little or no measures are taken (Joshi & Rahman, 2016). The knowledge, attitude and practice of young adults are significant to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG), promoting responsible production and consumption patterns in the fashion industry. Clothing production in developing countries can leverage digital transformation, total quality management, and sustainable practices (Diyaolu, 2022; Ogunyemi *et al.*, 2023).

Even though sustainability is an emerging trend, consumers repeatedly buy clothes that have harmful environmental impacts. Consumers' increasing interest in sustainability is yet to manifest in their knowledge, attitude and practice (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Research still lacks a comprehensive approach to explain consumers' purchase behavior of sustainable clothing (Rausch, & Kopplin, 2021). There is a need to obtain data that can be useful in predicting future trends and achievement of fashion sustainability goals, hence this study.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of sustainable fashion among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. knowledge indicators of sustainable fashion among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State.
2. attitude towards sustainable fashion among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State.
3. ways young adults practice sustainable fashion in Ile-Ife, Osun State.

### Research questions

1. What is the level of knowledge of sustainable fashion among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State?
2. What are the attitudes towards sustainable fashion among young adults in Ile-Ife, Osun State?
3. In what ways do young adults practice sustainable fashion in Ile-Ife, Osun State?

### Methodology

**Design of Study:** The study was a survey to assess knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of sustainable fashion.

**Area of the Study:** The study was conducted in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Ile-Ife is an urban area situated in southwestern Nigeria situated at 7.4667° N latitude and 4.5667° E longitude. According to the United Nations World Population Prospect, Ile-Ife has a population of approximately 423,000 people with a growth rate of 3.42% from 2023 (United Nations, 2024). It is known for its historical significance, higher educational institutions and teaching hospitals. Young adults dress in local and foreign cultures. It is an economic centre for buying and selling clothing, textiles and apparel in markets like Oja Tutun, New Market, and Ife Resort Centre among others. Administratively, Ile-Ife has two local

governments (LGs) namely Ife Central and Ife East. The area is made up of 11 wards.

**Population of the Study:** The population of the study comprised young adults aged 18-26 years in Ife Central Local Government Area, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. These individuals were specifically chosen because they represent a demographic likely to be engaged with sustainable fashion trends, given their proximity to higher educational institutions and urban lifestyles. The population included both in-school (university and college students) and out-of-school (working or unemployed) young adults. The relevant characteristics of this group include their engagement in educational or vocational activities and their exposure to both local and global fashion trends.

**Sample for the Study:** The sample was drawn using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The study targeted young adults from specific wards within Ife Central Local Government Area, namely Iremo/Ajebandele, Iremo/Eleyele, and Moore/Ojaja, because of their high population density of young adults. The selection of participants within these wards was based on their willingness to participate in the study. They were located in their houses, hostels, along the streets and market areas. The sample size was 250 respondents, distributed across the selected wards as follows: Iremo/Ajebandele (90), Iremo/Eleyele (80), and Moore/Ojaja (80).

**Instrument for Data Collection:** Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. It was developed

through literature review based on the specific objectives of the study. The questionnaire had four sections with three sets of response scales of Yes/No for socio-economic characteristics and specific objective No 1; 5-point scale with Strongly agreed (5), agreed (4), undecided (3), disagreed (2) and strongly disagreed (1) for specific objective No 2; and 3-point scale with Always (3), sometimes (2) and never (1) for specific objective No 3. The validation of the questionnaire was done by three experts in Clothing and Textiles. Cronbach's alpha procedure was used to determine the reliability coefficient. A value 0.79 was obtained.

**Data Collection Methods:** A total of 250 copies of the structured questionnaire were administered with the help of two trained interviewers who ensured the questionnaires were completed and collected on the spot. All 250 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, resulting in a 100% response rate.

**Data Analysis Techniques:** Data generated from the study were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics: mean, frequency and percentages were used to interpret the findings. Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between knowledge, attitude and practice of sustainable fashion.

## Results

### Respondents' Socio-demographic characteristics

Data analysis on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents shows that the mean age was  $26 \pm 0.29$  years, showing a more vibrant age. A majority of the sample has tertiary education (82.0%). The majority of the sample is single (74.0%) and of Yoruba ethnicity (84.8%). Self-employed individuals make up 54.8% of the sample, indicating a significant presence of entrepreneurial activity.

**Table 1: Percentage Responses on Knowledge of Sustainable Fashion among Young Adults in Ile-Ife**

S/N	Knowledge Indicators	Yes (F%)	No (F%)
1	Fashion is the art of expressing beauty through clothing	232 (92.8)	18 (7.2)
2	Fashion encompasses many other things in our everyday life, other than clothes and accessories	223 (89.2)	27 (10.8)
3	Fashion is the most change-intense category of consumer products	212 (84.8)	38 (15.2)
4	Sustainable fashion supports proper clothing maintenance	213 (85.2)	37 (14.8)
5	In Sustainable fashion consumers enjoy and become attached to their clothing	176 (70.4)	74 (29.6)
6	In sustainable fashion, consumers give away their clothing	160 (64)	90 (36)
7	Buying second-hand clothes is more sustainable	162 (64.8)	88 (35.2)
8	Buying fashion brand clothes is more sustainable	191 (76.4)	59 (23.6)
9	Sustainable fashion is made from organic raw materials	180 (72)	70 (28)
10	Sustainability does not involve the use of harmful chemicals	183 (73.2)	67 (26.8)

S/N	Knowledge Indicators	Yes (F%)	No (F%)
<i>Table 1 continued</i>			
11	Sustainable fashion aims at reducing fabrics wastes	176 (70.4)	74 (29.6)
12	Sustainable fashion reduces carbon footprint in production	155 (62)	95 (38)
13	Sustainable fashion promotes fair labour practices	165 (66)	85 (34)
14	Sustainable fashion encourages recycling of materials	172 (68.8)	78 (31.2)
15	Sustainable fashion minimizes water usage during production	158 (63.2)	92 (36.8)

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 shows the percentage responses of young adults on knowledge of sustainable fashion. The majority of the respondents understood that fashion is the art of expressing a sense of beauty through clothes (92.8%). They are aware that sustainable fashion supports proper clothing maintenance (85.2%).

They understood that sustainable fashion is made from organic raw materials (72%), and does not involve

the use of harmful chemicals (73.2%). There was an awareness that buying fashion brand clothes is more sustainable (76.4%). Most of the respondents stated that sustainable fashion is dependent upon engaging consumers to give away or discard their clothing (64%) and that buying second-hand clothes was more sustainable (64.8%).

**Table 2: Mean Responses on Attitude Indicators towards Sustainable Fashion Consumption Among Young Adults in Ile-Ife**

S/N	Attitude Indicators	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I value fashion products made or packaged in recycled materials	3.56	1.00	Positive
2	I prefer apparel that I can wear over a longer term	4.16	1.05	Positive
3	I consider apparel that goes out of style quickly	2.99	1.10	Negative
4	I like clothing made of organically grown natural fibers	3.62	1.15	Positive
5	I value clothes with low-impact or no-dye processing	3.58	1.20	Positive
6	I prefer clothes with environmentally friendly packaging	4.12	1.25	Positive
7	I share my experiences about green products with others	3.60	1.30	Positive
8	I enjoy fair trade clothing	3.78	1.35	Positive
9	I actively seek out sustainable fashion brands	4.12	1.36	Positive
10	I consider the environmental impact in fashion purchases	3.62	1.15	Positive

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 shows responses to attitude indicators towards sustainable fashion consumption. Young adults showed positive attitudes in selecting apparel

they can wear over a longer term ( $\bar{x}=4.16$ ). They preferred clothes with environmentally friendly packaging techniques ( $\bar{x}=4.12$ ) indicating a

preference for eco-friendly packaging and materials. There is however a negative attitude towards selecting apparel that goes out of style quickly ( $\bar{x}$ =2.99). Others enjoyed fair trade

clothing ( $\bar{x}$ =3.78) and shared their experiences and knowledge about green products with friends and family ( $\bar{x}$ =3.60).

**Table 3: Percentage Responses on Practice Indicators of Sustainable Fashion among Young Adults in Ile-Ife**

S/N Practice Indicators	Always F(%)	Sometimes F(%)	Never F(%)
1 I buy new clothing	143 (57.2)	73 (29.2)	34 (13.6)
2 I purchase second-hand clothing	123 (49.2)	90 (36.0)	37 (14.8)
3 I donate clothing items for charity	127 (50.8)	100 (40.0)	23 (9.2)
4 I wear low-maintenance clothes	135 (54.0)	80 (32.0)	35 (14.0)
5 I choose environmentally safe garments	160 (64.0)	80 (32.0)	10 (4.0)
6 I opt for eco-friendly labelled and packed items	141 (56.4)	75 (30.0)	34 (13.6)
7 I wear clothes for longer periods	139 (55.6)	100 (40.0)	11 (4.4)
8 I actively participate in clothing swap or rental programs	130 (52.0)	90 (36.0)	30 (12.0)
9 I avoid purchasing fast fashion items	110 (44.0)	90 (36.0)	50 (20.0)
10 I seek information about fashion brands' sustainability practices	115 (46.0)	90 (36.0)	45 (18.0)
11 I repair or mend clothing instead of discarding	120 (48.0)	100 (40.0)	30 (12.0)

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 3 shows the percentage responses on practice indicators of sustainable fashion among young adults. Majority frequently buy new clothing (57.2%) and choose environmentally safe garments (64.0%). About 55.6% preferred wearing clothes for longer periods and donated clothing items for charity (50.8%). However, only 52.0% always actively participated in clothing swaps or rental programs and avoided purchasing fast fashion items (44.0%).

### Discussion of Findings

The knowledge of young adults on the importance of organic materials, reduced carbon footprint, and promoting fair labour practices are

worthy of mention. Based on the fact that majority has tertiary education could be responsible. Formal education has been observed to influence level of knowledge in sustainable fashion (Agarwal, 2020). Knowledge can guide policies and business strategies in the fashion industry to skew consumer expectations and promote sustainability. Adjabeng (2022) documented that only two-fifths of the respondents in Ghana had good knowledge of sustainable fashion. Young adults also showed a strong inclination towards environmentally sustainable and socially responsible fashion. Hur, & Cassidy (2019), opined that a lack of knowledge regarding

sustainable design and a lack of designed approaches can inhibit sustainable fashion.

The attitudes of young adults reflect a favourable disposition towards sustainable fashion. Attitudes can act as a mediator between perceived risks and behavioural intentions in sustainable fashions (Kang & Kim, 2013). The positive attitudes towards recycled materials, low-impact processing, and organic fibers are reflected in their choice of environmentally safe garments. Joshi & Rahman (2016) revealed attitudes as predictors of young consumer's green purchase behaviour in India. This provides opportunities for businesses to cater to these preferences and align their products and practices with sustainability goals. Furthermore, the success of sustainable fashion is dependent upon engaging young adults who wear, maintain, and discard their clothing (Lewis & Loker, 2015). High mean scores are observed in selecting long-term apparel, buying organic fibers, and considering the environmental impact before purchases.

Kam & Yoo (2022), found that most consumers practice sustainable fashion designs that satisfy customer taste and emotions. The practice of selecting environmentally safe garments among young adults in Ile-Ife demonstrated a commitment to sustainability in daily life. Diyaolu *et al.*, (2023) and Diyaolu, (2010) highlighted the use of traditional eco-friendly fabrics during the *Ojude-Oba* festival among the male adolescent in Ijebu-Ode.

The choice of eco-friendly labelled and packed items indicates an understanding of sustainable fashion.

Granskog *et al.*, (2020) reported that consumers are going out of their way to recycle and purchase products in environmentally friendly packaging.

Adjabeng (2022) affirmed that adolescents buy new and secondhand clothes. As observed in this study, buying new clothing items on a regular basis contrasts with sustainable efforts but highlights consumer behaviour trends. In most cases, new clothing was purchased for festive occasions. Brands can address this trend by promoting sustainable alternatives for festive wears. Purchasing second-hand clothing and donating items for charity reflect a growing awareness and participation in sustainable practices that reduce textile waste in landfills (Diddi *et al.*, 2019). Reusing and buying second-hand clothing and prioritising clothing longevity are sustainable clothing consumption behaviours (Olwoch *et al.*, 2023; Rakhshanpouret *et al.*, 2021). However, Kang & Kim (2013) opined that social risk could keep young consumers from deciding to purchase environmentally sustainable apparel.

Actively participating in clothing swaps or rental programs by young adults points to innovative approaches to sustainable fashion. The avoidance of fast fashion will reduce the cubic meters of water expected to be utilized in clothing production (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Diyaolu (2024) reported that participants showed positive response to upcycled fabrics in a survey conducted in Ile-Ife.

In the Fashion Revolution's 2021 Consumer Survey, 60% of respondents aged 16-25 would like to know how their clothes are manufactured.

Consumers prioritize trends over brands, seeking a particular style rather than a particular name when shopping sustainably (Heuritech, 2022).

### Conclusion

This study concluded that young adults had adequate knowledge and a positive perception of sustainable fashion indicating a growing awareness of environmental and social issues related to fashion. They demonstrated positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion practices, as evidenced by their preference for durable clothing, environmentally friendly materials, and participation in fair trade initiatives. There is also a significant implementation of sustainable fashion practices including the purchase of second-hand clothing, donation of clothing items for charity, and preference for eco-friendly garments. The study highlights the active participation of a youthful demographic in sustainable fashion practices, suggesting a potential for continued growth and influence. The dominance of Yoruba ethnicity among respondents underscores the influence of cultural factors on sustainable fashion choices, highlighting the importance of cultural perspectives in promoting sustainable behaviours.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

1. More public enlightenment programmes by the National Orientation Agency on fast fashion will reinforce consumers' shift towards more sustainable fashion.

2. Since consumers are conscious of and have a preference for eco-friendly materials, fashion brands should prioritise the use of eco-friendly materials in production.
3. Fashion institutions should incorporate organic materials in manufacturing based on consumers' preferences and highlight eco-friendly dyeing practices.
4. Fashion businesses should align their products and practices with sustainability goals based on the knowledge of respondents provided in the study.
5. Consumers should recommend and share information about eco-friendly products.

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