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From awareness to action: the role of personal values and ethical stance in opposing slave labor in the fashion supply chain

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the personal characteristics that influence young consumers' intention to avoid brands associated with harmful labor practices in their supply chains, aligning with the goals of SDG 8.7 on decent work and economic growth. Employing a quantitative methodology, Principal Component Analysis and Multiple Linear Regression were utilized to explore factors shaping ethical purchasing behavior. Key findings reveal that socio-environmental concerns and fashion orientation positively impact this intention, with the principal component "Orientation to Social Causes" emerging as the most significant factor. Conversely, low levels of responsible consumption negatively affect ethical purchasing intentions, highlighting an information gap that could be addressed through educational campaigns. In particular, the component labeled "Orientation toward Social Causes" emerged as the primary predictor. Conversely, lower levels of responsible consumption correspond with diminished ethical purchasing, exposing an informational gap that necessitates targeted educational interventions. Prior volunteer or community involvement is positively associated with rejecting brands that do not meet labor standards, whereas social class, age, and international experience show no significant effect. Managerial implications emphasize the need for ethical marketing strategies that combine fashion with sustainability, stressing the importance of aligning brand narratives with young consumers' moral aspirations and identities. Recommendations include enhancing consumer awareness, engaging influencers, and increasing supply chain transparency. Despite limitations related to sample generalizability and the inherent constraints of a cross-sectional design, this study contributes substantially to theoretical and practical advancements in ethical consumption. Ultimately, it provides a platform for future research using qualitative and comparative methods to enhance our understanding of purchasing decisions amidst labor injustice and to examine education and media roles in shaping responsible consumer behavior.

1. Introduction

The fashion sector generated USD 46 billion in Brazil in 2021, which is expected to reach US$ 1 trillion worldwide by 2025 (Exame, 2022). Also, the textile industry stands out as the second most polluting industry globally, accounting for 20 % of total water waste, 10 % of carbon emissions, and the reduction of workers to modern slaves (Colucci et al., 2019; Crane, 2013; Richards, 2022; Tatiana et al., 2023). For instance, in 2021, the G20 member states traded in goods worth around US$468 billion that were identified as being potentially associated with modern slavery. The 2030 Agenda, established by the United Nations (UN), introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the eighth SDG being decent work and economic growth: promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (United Nation, 2010). In Brazil, under target 8.7, a subcategory of the SDG, the goal is to eradicate forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor, especially in their worst forms, by 2025 (IPEA, 2023).

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Recent findings by Lee (2023) suggest that consumer intentions are influenced by moral and economic benefits. Additionally, Sharabati et al. (2023) demonstrated that consumer awareness and the association of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with brand image have a positive impact on brand perception within the Jordanian apparel industry. Conversely, according to Goswami and Jaiswal (2023) study involving 252 American consumers, purchase decisions of less informed consumers about the brand are swayed by deceptive CSR marketing. Furthermore, Abbate et al. (2024) extensively reviewed two decades of research, indicating partial acknowledgment by the textile, apparel, and fashion industries of their responsibility for global environmental pollution and, in certain contexts, the exploitation of cheap labor in developing countries. Abbate calls for expanded research on consumer behavior concerning sustainable clothing, circular economy initiatives, and supply chain challenges. The research conducted by Modi and Zhao (2020), employing data mining techniques on social media platforms Twitter and Instagram, investigated the framework of moral responsibility in corporate sustainability as perceived by public opinion. Their findings revealed significant public interest in three key areas within the fashion industry: the transparency of apparel supply chains, environmental concerns, and labor conditions. This study highlights the growing awareness and scrutiny of corporate practices in the fashion sector, particularly regarding ethical and sustainable operations (Modi & Zhao, 2020). However, inconsistencies were observed regarding the impact of subjective opinions on the tangible CSR actions of companies. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2015) confirmed the influence of sustainable principles and managerial strategies on consumer behaviors in the domain of fashion consumption: altruistic inclinations, receptiveness to change, anthropocentrism, and ecocentrism emerged as pivotal factors in fostering sustainable lifestyle choices.

According to Nogueira et al. (2023), consumers are increasingly aligning themselves with fast-fashion brands that demonstrate a commitment not only to economic sustainability but also to social values, thereby seeking to strengthen long-term relationships based on trust and affective commitment. The discourse surrounding social values in the supply chain encompasses the "S" component, focusing on addressing human rights concerns, particularly in relation to modern slavery. Additionally, it explores consumer perceptions regarding the social aspects of sustainability in clothing consumption (Gold et al., 2015; Köksal et al., 2018; Yawar & Seuring, 2017). This multifaceted approach aims to elucidate the complex interplay between ethical considerations, consumer behavior, and sustainable practices within the context of the global textile and apparel industry (Gold et al., 2015; Köksal et al., 2018; Yawar & Seuring, 2017). However, reports from Fashion Transparency Index and McKinsey consulting (2022; 2024) offer insights into the criticisms directed at the fashion industry, particularly regarding social rights and consumer consciousness. It seems crucial to investigate the critical factors influencing young consumers' intention to avoid brands associated with labor practices that violate human rights. This justification is also related to the findings of Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014), which revealed that some young people may not be sensitive to degrading forms of work in the supply chains of the fashion-textile sector. The present study aimed to identify which personal characteristics influence the intention to stop purchasing clothing from companies that do not adopt decent work practices in their supply chain. The study opted for a quantitative approach, which combined Principal Component Analysis with Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The method aims to understand the factors shaping young consumers' intention not to purchase clothing from companies that do not adopt decent work practices in their supply chain. This study uniquely examines consumer intentions to avoid purchasing from companies accused of contemporary slavery in the Brazilian fashion retail industry. It focuses on contemporary slavery in socially responsible consumption, adopts an industry-specific approach, provides an emerging economy perspective, and emphasizes behavioral intentions rather than general attitudes. The research addresses a critical human rights issue in global supply chains, provides insights into consumer responses to unethical practices, informs business strategies and risk management, extends socially responsible consumption theories, and offers practical implications for campaigns and policy interventions. The study's significance lies in its potential to influence consumer behavior and corporate practices, contributing to a diverse understanding of socially responsible consumption in an important emerging market context.

The following sections will address the theoretical framework, proposition of hypotheses and constructs, methodological procedures, and the analysis and discussion that will synthesize the main results. Finally, the conclusions, research contributions, and limitations with insights into future studies are presented.

1.1. Theoretical framework

According to Anti-Slavery International, there are four elements considered in the concept of modern slavery: individuals forced to work under threat; owned or controlled by an "employer" through mental and physical abuse; dehumanized and treated as commodities; and physically constrained or restricted in their freedom of movement (Anti-Slavery International, 2020). A socially responsible consumer adopts acquisition, usage, and disposal practices of products and services aimed at minimizing or eradicating negative impacts, seeking to maximize lasting benefits for society (Buerke et al., 2017; Mohr et al., 2001). This behavior can influence the consumer's perception of companies and their purchasing decisions (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2014; Webb et al., 2008). Thus, the consumption process seeks information about the product, production, acquisition, usage, storage, disposal, and post-disposal evaluation (Buerke et al., 2017; Cavusoglu & Dakhli, 2016). A socially responsible consumer seeks to avoid purchasing and using products and services from companies that may harm society, preferring products and services from companies that benefit society throughout the consumption experience (Alyahya et al., 2023).

In the context of marketing and consumer behavior, a "psychological contract" may include expectations regarding product quality, the level of service provided, and the company's ethical and social responsibility (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). When consumers feel that a company has not fulfilled these implicit expectations, it can be said that the psychological contract has been "violated." This violation can lead to a range of negative behaviors by the consumer, such as discontinuing the use of a service, boycotting, or even defamation actions against the company (Kim et al., 2022; Min Kong & Ko, 2017; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

Bem et al. (2023) asserted that with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, consumers gained access to more information about production processes and potential harmful consequences for the population and the environment, leading to changes in their profiles. It is emphasized that sustainability also includes quality of life and personal development in work. The authors stated that there are two types of consumers: those who prefer fast fashion with trends changing rapidly, leading to disposals, and those who prefer slow fashion with a production model that seeks to incorporate ethical values, minimize environmental damage, and encourage sustainable consumption with the use of more durable pieces. From an exploratory study conducted, the authors concluded that not all consumers may have access to slow fashion due to its higher cost.

Pereira and Aguiar (2023) emphasized that the Covid-19 pandemic brought about an initial period of compulsive consumption and that the return to the "new normal" led to a valorization of responsible consumption, both from an economic and socio-environmental perspective. Besides, socio-environmental concerns involve considering the social and environmental impacts of purchasing decisions, while fashion orientation refers to an individual's interest in and adherence to current fashion trends (Dabija et al., 2022; Pop et al., 2023). Generational differences in attitudes towards fast fashion and sustainability are further explored by Dabija et al. (2022). Their research, involving 478

respondents across Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, investigates the influence of store attributes and socio-environmental responsibility on customer satisfaction and loyalty towards fast fashion stores. These concepts influence consumers' intentions to avoid buying clothes from companies with poor labor practices in their supply chains, with responsible consumption attitudes playing a significant role in this decision-making process. According to Dabija et al. (2022), store attributes - encompassing both traditional factors and socio-environmental practices - play a pivotal role in shaping consumer satisfaction and loyalty in fast fashion stores, particularly when considering generational differences among Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. By drawing on face-to-face questionnaires administered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and employing structural equation modeling (SmartPLS), the authors reveal that although all attributes positively influence satisfaction and loyalty, socio-environmental responsibility exerts a significant impact on loyalty yet does not directly affect satisfaction. Extending generational theory, the study highlights distinct behaviors across different age cohorts and underscores the relevance of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model in understanding how variables such as price, quality, and socio-environmental responsibility function as stimuli that ultimately shape consumer satisfaction and loyalty toward fast fashion brands (Dabija et al., 2022). While Dabija et al. (2022) emphasize the pivotal role of socio-environmental responsibility in shaping consumer satisfaction and loyalty, particularly among distinct generational cohorts, Pop et al. (2023) extend this understanding by demonstrating how hedonic, utilitarian, and social attributes of fast fashion mobile apps influence purchase intention, mediated by attitude and moderated by situational factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Both studies underscore the importance of ethical and sustainable practices in addressing consumer expectations, revealing that responsible consumption attitudes, driven by values and experiential engagement, significantly impact decision-making processes. Together, these findings suggest that integrating ethical supply chain practices with innovative, consumer-oriented technologies can enhance brand loyalty and drive behavioral changes toward more sustainable consumption patterns in the fast fashion sector.

Garre Sánchez et al. (2022) highlight that not only one, but multiple trends in fashion have emerged, allowing consumers to compose their own identity. Slow fashion, with its more conscious and responsible consumption, is highlighted as a response given by consumers.

In a scenario of a globalized economy, young consumers play a crucial role in promoting social justice, especially regarding responsibility in choosing products that do not involve slave-like labor. In this scenario, the study by Gupta et al. (2019) analyzed the behavior of 6,386 clothing consumers in Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The authors presented evidence of how significant promoting sustainable consumption can be and its influence on good practices in the fashion sector. Furthermore, the research advocated for the collective effort of different actors, such as government, society, and companies, in creating a sustainable fashion system (Gupta et al., 2019; Lusty & Richards, 2022).

In this context, implications in brand-consumer relationship strategies were associated with ethics and social responsibility (Colucci et al., 2019; Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009; Hosta & Zabkar, 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Sheth et al., 2011). For example, companies like Zara, M.Officer, Smart, Adidas, Nike, Renner, Le Lis Blanc, and Bo. Bo have faced criticism for being held responsible for reducing workers to conditions like slavery in their supply chains (Fashion Transparency Index, 2017; RepórterBrasil, 2012, julho 12).

Faced with challenges in their supply chain, the fashion retail giant C&A was cited as an example of good practices. It invested in internal measures and mediation actions in its production chain in partnership with the National Pact Institute for the Eradication of Slave Labor (InPacto), to prevent conditions of work like slavery (InPacto, 2023). It is emphasized that InPacto is a Brazilian institution that supports national and multinational companies through the monitoring of CSR commitments in combating slave-like practices (InPacto, 2023).

The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) annually monitors over 250 retail companies regarding social labor practices in their supply chains. Monitoring involves human rights and environmental policies classified through the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The Fashion Revolution's report from the Fashion Transparency Index in 2022 revealed an international movement towards sustainable consumption of fashion products, where 32 % of the one hundred textile sector companies published a list of suppliers' data to increase transparency in the market (FTI, 2022).

In the next section, the hypotheses of this study investigating purchasing behavior among consumers regarding the fast-fashion business model, particularly considering the challenges posed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which seeks to eradicate forced labor and modern slavery, are presented.

1.2. Hypothesis proposition and constructs

In this study, the dependent variable is the intention to cease purchasing clothing from companies whose manufacturing processes do not comply with SDG 8.7. To explain variations in this intention, we propose a series of hypotheses—each corresponding to one independent variable derived from our Principal Component Analysis. This approach ensures clarity by isolating the influence of each factor on consumer behavior.

H1. (orientation to social causes): Consumers with a strong orientation toward social causes will exhibit a higher intention to avoid brands associated with unethical labor practices.

This hypothesis is grounded in the extensive literature on socially responsible consumption, which posits that individuals with heightened social awareness are more inclined to support ethical brands (Buerke et al., 2017; Mohr et al., 2001). Such consumers are particularly sensitive to issues of human rights and labor conditions, making social causes orientation a critical predictor of ethical purchasing behavior. Furthermore, social concern reflects an individual's awareness and commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. Empirical evidence indicates that consumer awareness and value orientation toward sustainability significantly influence responsible consumer behavior (Buerke et al., 2017; Mohr et al., 2001). Moreover, studies by Kim et al. (2022) and Ali (2021) illustrate that consumer animosity—stemming from social concern—can lead to active boycotts and reduced purchase intentions. This hypothesis posits that the higher the level of social concern, the more likely consumers are to act against companies involved in unethical labor practices.

H2. (fashion leadership): Consumers who demonstrate robust fashion leadership are more likely to alter their purchasing patterns in favor of brands that adhere to ethical production standards.

Fashion leadership, characterized by an acute interest in current trends and an initiative-taking approach to fashion consumption, has been linked to increased awareness of the broader social implications of fast fashion (Gam, 2011; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2014). This hypothesis posits that fashion-conscious consumers integrate ethical considerations into their fashion decisions, thus reinforcing the role of ethical marketing in the industry. Besides, fashion orientation theory posits that an individual's keen interest in trends and fashion-related information significantly influences their consumption patterns (Gam, 2011). Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014) further support this perspective by demonstrating that young, fashion-oriented consumers exhibit sensitivity to production methods. Thus, when these consumers become aware of unethical practices.

H3. (low responsible consumption): Consumers exhibiting low levels of responsible consumption will be less likely to avoid brands implicated in unethical labor practices.

This proposition draws on the notion that a lack of responsible

consumption—marked by limited consideration for the environmental and social impacts of purchases—is associated with a diminished sensitivity to labor abuses (Cavusoglu & Dakhli, 2016). Hence, low responsible consumption is expected to negatively influence the intention to avoid unethical brands.

H4. (valuing individual style): Consumers who highly value individual style, using clothing as a means of self-expression, are more likely to refrain from purchasing from brands that do not align with ethical labor practices.

The concept of valuing individual style is rooted in theories of symbolic consumption, which assert that fashion serves as a medium for self-expression and identity construction (Belk, 1988; Thompson et al., 2006). This hypothesis suggests that when consumers perceive their clothing as an extension of their identity, they become more discerning regarding the ethical standards of the brands they choose.

2. Methodological procedures

The target population of this research consisted of undergraduate students majoring in Production Engineering, aged 18 and above, from a community university. Sampling was convenience-based, hence non-probabilistic, which is appropriate for internet-based research (Hair et al., 2009). The Institution's Ethics Committee approved this research. To ensure ethical compliance, participation was voluntary and non-mandatory, thereby respecting participants' autonomy, and only students aged 18 or older were included.

Data were collected via online questionnaires administered through the Google Forms platform, which does not identify the origin of the data, thus preserving the anonymity of the research participants. The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions characterizing the respondents and 48 statements regarding the students' positions on situations that could characterize their behaviors regarding slave labor, statements developed by Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014) in their research with young university students. The data analysis for this study was conducted utilizing two statistical software platforms: Minitab v. 19 and Jamovi. Minitab v. 19 provided robust tools for advanced statistical modeling, ensuring the reliability of the results. Jamovi, an open-source statistical software, complemented the analysis by offering an intuitive interface and additional functionalities for data visualization and interpretation (Sahin & Aybek, 2019). The integration of these tools ensured a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous approach to the analysis, thereby enhancing the validity and replicability of the findings.

The measures for empirical analysis were previously validated through studies by Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014), Gam (2011), Mohr; Webb; Harris (2001), Webb; Mohr; Harris (2008), Alyahya et al. (2023), Kim et al. (2022), Min Kong and Ko (2017), and Cavusoglu and Dakhli (2016). Validation was associated with the purchase intention of fashion products adapted from fashion orientation scales. In the 48 questions with statements, the research participant had to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale, namely: (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.

Professors of the Production Engineering course at this community university were asked to distribute the survey link (in the form of a QR code) for students to complete in the classroom. The link was also made available in WhatsApp groups of various classes. The survey took place between November 21st and December 3rd, 2022.

For the assignment of social class, the Brazil Economic Classification Criteria (CCEB) from the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP) of 2022 (ABEP, 2022) was used. This classification incorporates factors that determine consumption behavior. Due to the profile of the students in this course, the responses in this research were dichotomized into Class A and other social classes. For age group dichotomization, for comparison purposes between groups, the age group of adolescents and young adults (up to 24 years) (Brazil, 2007) and other age groups were adopted. The selection of young consumers, particularly undergraduate students, as the target population for this research is justified by their demographic importance, formative stage of consumer habit development, future influence as professionals, sensitivity to social issues, digital nativity, consistency with previous research, and accessibility as a sample population. Personal characteristics, including demographic variables, educational background, socioeconomic factors, developmental stage, and individual differences, are considered influential factors in shaping ethical attitudes and consumer behavior. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how these factors impact ethical fashion consumption among young consumers.

The collected data were then consolidated, and a descriptive analysis of these data was conducted using frequency tables, as well as descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and 95 % confidence intervals for means and percentages (Montgomery et al., 2000).

Subsequently, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with orthogonal Varimax rotation was performed to reduce the set of 41 potential explanatory variables to a smaller number of uncorrelated variables (principal components), making it possible to conduct Multiple Linear Regression analysis using the principal components as explanatory variables (Hair et al., 2009).

Another Principal Component Analysis was conducted for the items composing the dependent variable "Intention to stop buying clothes whose manufacturing process does not comply with SDG 8.7". This analysis aimed to confirm that the statements were all grouped into a single principal component (one-dimensionality).

For some reverse-content variables, scores were transformed to ensure that all correlations within the same principal component were positive. Variables with cross-loadings were removed from the model and variables with communalities much lower than 0.5 were removed as well. For model selection, it was considered that most variables should have communalities of at least 0.5, and those below this value should be close to it.

As a criterion for choosing the number of principal components, it was adopted that these should have eigenvalues greater than one. The percentage of variance explained by all principal components should be at least 60 %, as Hair et al. (2009) recommended.

Sample adequacy (presence of correlations between the items to be grouped) was verified using the Bartlett sphericity test, which should present a p-value <0.05, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which should have an acceptable value greater than or equal to 0.6 and ideally at least equal to 0.8. Additionally, the Sample Adequacy Measure (MSA) was calculated for each statement, with acceptable and ideal values being the same as for KMO (Pett et al., 2003).

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity, assessing whether there was a high degree of correlation between measures of the same concept. Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR), as factor weights were used to obtain scores. Both measures were calculated from the factor loadings obtained in the Principal Component Analysis, which runs separately for each principal component. According to Hair et al. (2009), a minimum value of 0.7 was required for CR and a minimum value of 0.5 for AVE. Discriminant validity was verified by Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019).

Once the Principal Component Analysis was performed, multiple scales were then calculated for each questionnaire, consisting of the values corresponding to each of the resulting principal components, using the average of the items.

Subsequently, Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted using the stepwise method to explain the variable "Intention to stop buying clothes whose manufacturing process does not comply with SDG 8.7", related to decent work and economic growth, using the other principal components obtained in the Principal Component Analysis.

The assumptions for using the Multiple Linear Regression model that the residuals have a normal distribution mean zero, constant variance, and are independent, were verified through residual plots and the

Anderson-Darling Normality test.

Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were calculated, with values less than 4 indicating no multicollinearity among the explanatory variables. Additionally, for each response, Cook's distance was calculated, with values less than one indicating no influential observation. Another calculated coefficient was Mallow's, which indicates the unbiasedness of the estimate of the response variable when its value is close to and less than the number of explanatory variables (Montgomery et al., 2000).

For comparing means for two unpaired samples with unknown variances, the Student's t-test was used. To perform such a test, it was necessary to determine if there was equality between the variances of the two groups, as this test is conducted differently when the variances of the two groups are or are not statistically equal. In this regard, the hypothesis of equal variances was evaluated using the F-test when the variables in both samples adhered to normal distributions, and otherwise using Levene's test (Montgomery et al., 2000).

All confidence intervals were calculated with 95 % confidence, and all hypothesis tests were performed adopting a significance level of 5 %, thus rejecting hypotheses whose descriptive level (p-value) was less than this value.

2.1. Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the sample

The age of the research participants ranged from 18 to 31 years, with an average of 22.2 years (S.D. = 2.9 years), typical of the community university in Brazil. 35.9 % of them identified as female, 62.5 % as male, and 1.6 % did not respond. This is also typical of an engineering course, which is male in Brazilian universities. Regarding social class, some respondents left one or more questions blank, implying that they were not classified. Based on the responses, 52.7 % of the participants were classified as class A, 41.3 %as B to E, without predominance of specific one, and 6.0 % did not respond. These figures also represent very well the Brazilian scenario, where students from higher classes have more chances of reaching university education.

To better understand the sample, other variables were researched. Regarding the question about having lived abroad, 25.5 % answered affirmatively, 74.5 % answered negatively, showing that despite the high social class a deeper living experience was not a characteristic of the group. Regarding having done volunteer work, 66.8 % answered yes, 33.1 % answered no, and 34.2 % of the participants said they had participated in community associations, while 65.8 % said they had not, what gives a perspective about how close the respondents have been to the least favored. 64.1 % claimed to be aware of SDG 8.7 - Sustainable Development Goal, which deals with decent work and economic growth, while 35.87 % claimed they had not.

2.2. The principal component analysis (PCA)

Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014) developed a questionnaire comprising 48 statements, with seven related to the dependent variable "Intention to stop buying" and 41 potential explanatory variables.

According to Hair et al. (2009), considering a sample size of 184 participants, number of valid questionnaires obtained as responses in the data collection of this research, a significance level of 0.05, and a test power of 0.80, factor loadings of at least 0.45 were considered significant. The Principal Component Analysis of the seven statements used in the measurement of the dependent variable resulted in a single principal component named "Intention to stop buying clothes," with an eigenvalue of 4.30, Bartlett's test with a p-value less than 0.01, KMO equal to 0.90, and an adequate reliability level (CR = 0.92 and AVE = 0.64). Factor loadings of the statements ranged from 0.629 (I have no intention of changing my buying habits, even knowing that there is employment of forced labor in the company.) to 0.833 (I intend to stop buying from companies that have been denounced by the press for employing forced labor). Communalities and MSA for each statement also have their values according to the literature.

In the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the 41 potential explanatory variables, five statements were excluded due to having communalities well below 0.5 and insufficient factor loadings (less than 0.45), and one variable exhibited cross-loading. The excluded statements were: "I like my clothes to be practical"; "During times of price increases, spending large amounts of money on clothes is ridiculous"; "I buy less clothing when there is a price increase"; "I make fewer purchases because of increased parking fees"; and "I don't like to go shopping." Subsequently, a model with six principal components, which explained 61.1 % of the total variability, composed of 36 variables, resulted.

The first principal component, "Orientation to social causes," consisted of 12 items pertained to clothing consumption mediated by actions to resolve social causes. This principal component had an eigenvalue of 8.05, CR of 0.95, and AVE of 0.59. Factor loadings of the statements ranged from 0.543 (I avoid buying products or hiring services from companies that discriminate against minorities.) to 0.864 (I try to buy from companies that help needy communities or orphans.). Communalities and MSA for each statement also have their values according to the literature.

The second component, "Fashion leadership," comprised ten items that grouped a type of consumption moderated by a lifestyle always aligned with fashion trends. This principal component had an eigenvalue of 6.26, CR of 0.93, and AVE of 0.58. Factor loadings of the statements ranged from 0.623 (I like to shop at stores that have nothing to do with the latest fashion.) to 0.817 (I am familiar with the latest trends and want to be the first to try them.), having communalities and MSA for each statement with values according to the literature.

The third and fourth principal components, denoted respectively as "Low responsible consumption" and "Little relevance to fashion," were composed of 4 items each. The third principal component represented consumption indifferent to social and environmental impacts and had an eigenvalue of 2.66, CR of 0.87, and AVE of 0.63, factor loadings from (I buy low-priced products even if they have negative impacts on the environment.) to 0.721 (When I shop, I buy products without considering the working conditions in the factories.) and communalities and MSA for each statement with values according to the literature, similarly to the components seeing at this point. The fourth principal component grouped consumption indifferent to the relevance of fashion trends and had an eigenvalue of 1.73, CR of 0.74, and AVE of 0.42. Despite the fourth principal component having an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.42, it was decided to retain it in the model, as the Composite Reliability (CR) was above 0.7, and content was coherent among its variables. That is, the content of the question that lowered the AVE, "I ignore what fashion experts tell me about what I should wear." was similar to the content of the other questions in the fourth principal component, and the AVE value was not far from 0.5.

The fifth principal component, "Valuing individual style," consisted of the items "I like to shop at different stores" and "Clothes are a way for me to express my individuality" and had an eigenvalue of 1.66, CR of 0.80, and AVE of 0.67. Finally, the sixth principal component, with 3 items, named "Clothes reflect the value of those who wear them," indicated an understanding that the type of clothing one wears represents a social or personal value, with an eigenvalue of 1.64, CR of 0.75, AVE of 0.51, and factor loadings, communalities and MSA according to what is recommended by literature.

The discriminant validity of the scales used to measure the constructs was verified using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), which compares the square root of the AVE of each construct with the Pearson correlation between the constructs. If there is discriminant validity, the correlations have values smaller than the square root of the AVE values of the scales. This condition was verified in all relations, confirming existence of discriminant validity, indicating that the scales used were adequate to measure the constructs.

Table 1 shows the linear correlation structure between the principal components, justifying, through the Principal Component Analysis, the

Table 1
– Correlation matrix (Fornell & Larcker discriminant validity).

Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Orientation to Social Causes	**0.768**						
2. Fashion Leadership	−0.065	**0.762**					
3. Low Responsible Consumption	−0.540*	−0.113	**0.794**				
4. Little Relevance to Fashion	−0.011	0.295*	0.004	**0.648**			
5. Valuation of Individual Style	0.267*	−0.428*	−0.025	−0.118	**0.819**		
6. Clothes Portray the Value of the Wearer	0.060	0.280*	−0.103	0.017	−0.187*	**0.714**	
7. Intention to Stop Buying Clothes	0.766*	0.122	−0.549*	0.055	0.220*	0.072	**0.800**
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.95	0.93	0.87	0.74	0.80	0.75	0.92
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.59	0.58	0.63	0.42	0.67	0.51	0.64

Legend: *p ≤ 0.01 (significant correlation at the 0.01 level).
Note: Values on the diagonal (in bold) are the square root of the AVE.
Source: The authors

reduction to 6 of the number of explanatory variables for the dependent variable "Intention to stop buying clothes."

The first study by Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014) and the results obtained in the present research reinforce the importance of social factors in purchasing decisions. For instance, the principal component "Orientation to Social Causes," appears analogous to the factors "Support for Social Causes" and "Sense of Collectivity" from the first study. These factors reflect a disposition among young consumers to favor companies with socially responsible practices and to avoid those that do not. However, this study presents the principal component, "Low Responsible Consumption," which does not have a direct equivalent to the research by Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014). Similarly, the first study introduces the factor "Pleasure in Shopping," which is not covered here. Both studies demonstrate reliability, as Cronbach's Alpha was high in the first study, as well as CR and AVE in the present one, and the statistical significance tests of Bartlett and KMO confirm the adequacy of PCA in the present study.

To understand consumer ethics among young people, especially regarding the rejection of brands that use labor under conditions analogous to slave labor, the present study corroborates with the seminal study by Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. (2014), as it highlights the importance of social factors in purchasing decisions, in agreement with Veludo-de-Oliveira et al.'s (2014) study on young people's intention to boycott brands and products linked to slave labor, which increases as support for social causes and their sense of collectivity also increase.

2.3. Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to verify the cease buying clothes as the response variable and the effect of resulting factors from Principal Component Analysis as potential explanatory variables, named Principal Components 1 to 6, respectively: orientation to social causes; fashion leadership; low responsible consumption; little relevance to fashion; valuing individual style; and clothing reflecting the value of those who wear it.

By applying the stepwise method, the best Multiple Linear Regression model was obtained involving PC1 (Orientation to social causes), PC2 (Fashion leadership), PC3 (Low responsible consumption), and PC5 (Valuing individual style) and consequent elimination of PC4 (Little relevance) and PC6 (Clothing reflecting the value of those who wear it).

Table 2 presents the regression coefficients, their respective standard errors (SE), p-value showing significance of the relationships between independent variables and the dependent one, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), all of which below 4, indicating no multicollinearity among the explanatory variables.

Social causes orientation, fashion leadership, and individual style appreciation positively influence the dependent variable, intention to stop buying clothes, meaning that the boycott of companies that engage in any form of unethical work is greater as support for social causes and involvement in activities to promote fashion trends increase. On the other hand, the principal component, "Low responsible consumption," negatively influences the independent variable, as the more significant the insensitivity to working conditions and environmental impacts, the lower the intention to stop buying clothes whose manufacturing process does not comply with SDG 8.7, which concerns decent work and economic growth.

Table 2
– Multiple Linear Regression results.

Term	Coefficient	SE	p-value	VIF
Constant	1.397	0.402	0.001	
PC1: Orientation to social causes	0.654	0.056	<0.001	1.55
PC2: Fashion leadership	0.181	0.045	<0.001	1.25
PC3: Low responsible consumption	−0.172	0.054	0.002	1.47
PC5: Valuation of individual style	0.224	0.091	0.014	1.33

Note: Dependent variable: PC7: Intention to stop buying clothes whose manufacturing process does not comply with SDG 8.7.
Source: The authors

This regression explained 64.6 % of the total variability (R^2) in the dependent variable. Cook's distances were also calculated for the 184 responses, with the maximum value obtained being equal to 0.118, which is less than 1, indicating no influential observations. The descriptive level of the Anderson–Darling test for the fit of the residuals to the normal distribution was 0.151, indicating that the hypothesis of adherence to the normal distribution was not rejected. Residual plots graphical analysis concluded that the residuals have a normal distribution mean zero, constant variance, and are independent (Fig. 1). Mallow's coefficient was calculated, with a value of 3.4, suitable for the multiple linear regression that had four explanatory variables. Considering all the results obtained, the multiple linear regression model was considered adequate.

The fact that the first principal component, "Social Causes Orientation," had the highest eigenvalue and, in absolute terms, the most significant coefficient considering its standard error, indicates that social engagement, including attitudes towards working conditions, is a significant factor in the purchasing decision of young consumers (H1).

The "Fashion Leadership," which was not considered in Veludo-de-Oliveira (2014) as a predictor of the intention to stop buying clothes from companies that did not adopt decent work practices in their supply chain in the present study, being included in the multiple linear regression equation and having a positive coefficient, indicated a possible change in this leadership position, suggesting sensitivity to SDG 8.7, by Lima et al. (2018) and Bem et al. (2023) (H2).

The fact that "Low Responsible Consumption" had a negative coefficient suggests that some young people may be uninformed or apathetic about good production practices. There is potential for educational interventions (H3).

The "Individual Style Valuation," with a positive coefficient, implies that individual style may represent an expression of personal values, including ethics and social responsibility, consistent with what (Bem

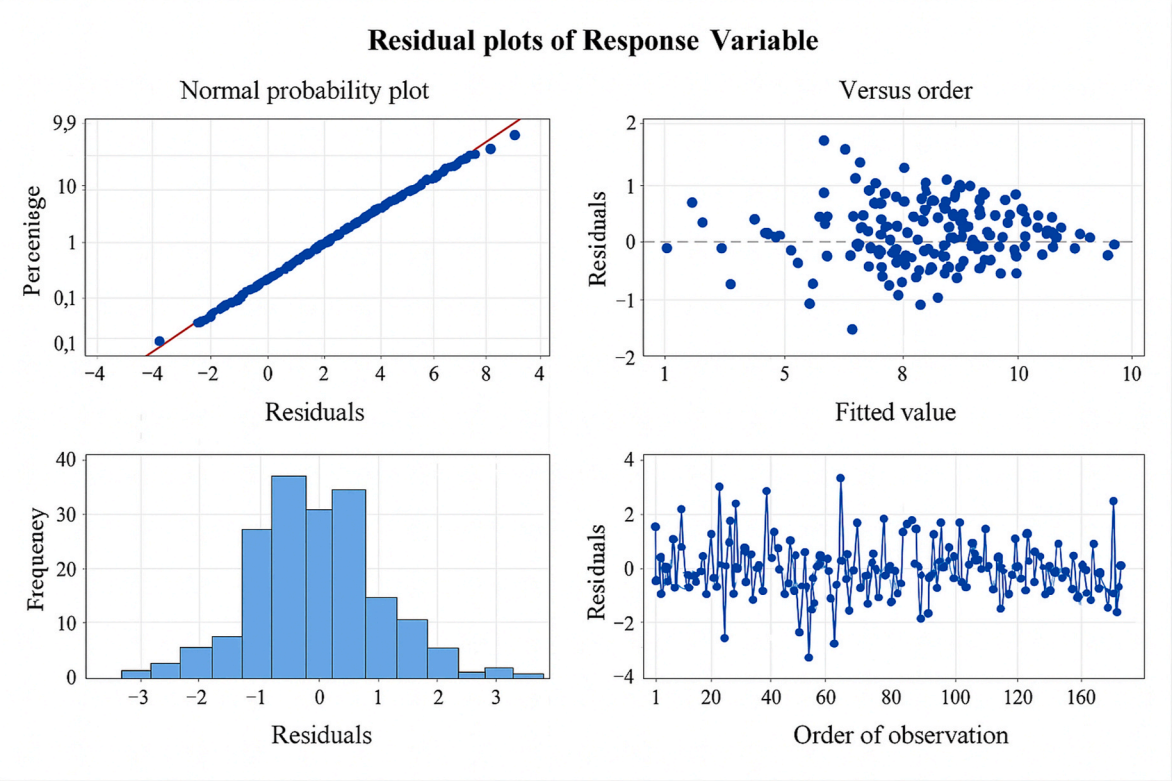

Fig 1. Residual plot for the conducted Multiple Linear Regression:
Source: The authors.

et al., 2023) stated when they affirmed that there are two types of consumers, one of which prefers slow fashion and is concerned with incorporating ethical values, minimizing environmental damage, and encouraging sustainable consumption by using more durable pieces (H4).

Comparisons of groups regarding principal components established.

To better understand the sample's specificities, t-Student tests were performed for each of the principal components (PC1 to PC6), and for the dependent variable, groups divided by gender, age, social class, volunteer work, living abroad, participation in community associations, and awareness of SDG 8.7.

Regarding gender, it was found differences in the means of principal component 2 (Fashion Leadership), principal component 4 (Low Relevance for Fashion), and principal component 5 (Individual Style Valuation), indicating that women value fashion-related factors more than men (Table 3). There was no indication of differences in the intention to stop buying clothes from companies that did not adopt decent work practices in their supply chain linked to gender characteristic.

It was observed that either in principal component 1 (Social Causes Orientation) and in principal component 5 (Individual Style Valuation), their means differed across social class groups, being lower in high, showing that high class individuals are less concerned with causes orientation related the intention to stop buying clothes from companies that did not adopt decent work practices in their supply chain, at least in the sample evaluated (Table 4).

Regarding the difference by age (Table 5), respondents were divided into groups of up to 24 years old and 25 years old or older, there was not found any difference in means for principal components 1 to 6 and for the response variable.

As for the experience of having lived abroad or not (Table 6), there were no significant differences in means for all principal components and the response variable, indicating this sort of variation does not affect

Table 3
– Gender comparison.

Variable	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	F	6.47	1.731	F	Yes	0.896	Yes	0.701
Response	M	6.37	1.769	F	Yes	0.896	Yes	0.701
PC1	F	6.33	1.728	Levene	Yes	0.770	Yes	0.629
PC1	M	6.20	1.747	Levene	Yes	0.770	Yes	0.629
PC2	F	4.90	1.781	Levene	Yes	0.434	No	<0.001
PC2	M	−3.81	1.881	Levene	Yes	0.434	No	<0.001
PC3	F	−4.74	1.451	F	No	0.024	Yes	0.280
PC3	M	−4.45	1.877	F	No	0.024	Yes	0.280
PC4	F	6.29	1.567	F	Yes	0.886	No	0.016
PC4	M	6.89	1.595	F	Yes	0.886	No	0.016
PC5	F	4.24	0.951	Levene	Yes	0.983	No	0.029
PC5	M	3.91	0.988	Levene	Yes	0.983	No	0.029
PC6	F	−5.80	1.453	F	Yes	0.787	Yes	0.896
PC6	M	−5.83	1.413	F	Yes	0.787	Yes	0.896

Source: The authors

Table 4
Social class comparison (A vs. others).

Variable	Social class A	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	Yes	6,21	1,665	Levene	Yes	0,240	Yes	0,120
Response	No	6,62	1,839	Levene	Yes	0,240	Yes	0,120
PC1	Yes	5,95	1,655	Levene	Yes	0,168	No	0,011
PC1	No	6,64	1,831	Levene	Yes	0,168	No	0,011
PC2	Yes	−4,15	2,108	Levene	No	0,004	Yes	0,823
PC2	No	−4,21	1,614	Levene	No	0,004	Yes	0,823
PC3	Yes	−4,55	1,733	F	No	0,975	Yes	0,870
PC3	No	−4,60	1,738	F	No	0,975	Yes	0,870
PC4	Yes	6,53	1,611	F	Yes	0,752	Yes	0,530
PC4	No	6,68	1,555	F	Yes	0,752	Yes	0,530
PC5	Yes	3,92	1,014	Levene	Yes	0,221	No	0,033
PC5	No	4,23	0,876	Levene	Yes	0,221	No	0,033
PC6	Yes	−5,88	1,416	Levene	Yes	0,694	Yes	0,303
PC6	No	−5,66	1,477	Levene	Yes	0,694	Yes	0,303

Source: The authors

Table 5
Comparison by age group.

Variable	25 years old or more	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	No	6,37	1,724	Levene	Yes	0,53	Yes	0,396
Response	Yes	6,66	1,841	Levene	Yes	0,53	Yes	0,396
PC1	No	6,20	1,666	Levene	Yes	0,072	Yes	0,374
PC1	Yes	6,50	2,069	Levene	Yes	0,072	Yes	0,374
PC2	No	−4,29	1,960	Levene	Yes	0,071	Yes	0,162
PC2	Yes	−3,77	1,592	Levene	Yes	0,071	Yes	0,162
PC3	No	−4,48	1,661	F	Yes	0,117	Yes	0,244
PC3	Yes	−4,87	2,033	F	Yes	0,117	Yes	0,244
PC4	No	6,61	1,618	F	Yes	0,726	Yes	0,309
PC4	Yes	6,93	1,526	F	Yes	0,726	Yes	0,309
PC5	No	4,07	0,993	Levene	Yes	0,45	Yes	0,380
PC5	Yes	3,90	0,971	Levene	Yes	0,45	Yes	0,380
PC6	No	−5,84	1,415	F	Yes	0,549	Yes	0,435
PC6	Yes	−5,62	1,524	F	Yes	0,549	Yes	0,435

Source: The authors

Table 6
– Comparison by having lived abroad.

Variable	Have lived abroad	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	Yes	6,32	1,785	Levene	Yes	0,293	Yes	0,716
Response	No	6,43	1,739	Levene	Yes	0,293	Yes	0,716
PC1	Yes	6,07	1,630	Levene	Yes	0,148	Yes	0,440
PC1	No	6,30	1,780	Levene	Yes	0,148	Yes	0,440
PC2	Yes	−4,00	1,859	F	Yes	0,750	Yes	0,368
PC2	No	−4,30	1,942	F	Yes	0,750	Yes	0,368
PC3	Yes	−4,56	1,975	F	Yes	0,089	Yes	0,998
PC3	No	−4,56	1,624	F	Yes	0,089	Yes	0,998
PC4	Yes	6,56	1,623	F	Yes	0,826	Yes	0,642
PC4	No	6,69	1,588	F	Yes	0,826	Yes	0,642
PC5	Yes	4,02	1,052	Levene	Yes	0,535	Yes	0,847
PC5	No	4,06	0,963	Levene	Yes	0,535	Yes	0,847
PC6	Yes	−6,00	1,469	F	Yes	0,788	Yes	0,284
PC6	No	−5,73	1,425	F	Yes	0,788	Yes	0,284

Source: The authors

the respondents' perception in terms of the variables involved in the present study.

Considering experience with volunteer work (Table 7), the dependent variable intention to stop buying clothes showed a significant difference in means, where those who have already performed volunteer work have a higher mean (experience with volunteer work), meaning that those who have already performed volunteer work have, on average, a higher intention of not buying clothes whose manufacturing process did not comply with SDG 8.7, related to decent work and economic growth.

Regarding participation or not in Community Associations (Table 8), both the dependent variable, Intention to stop buying clothes, and principal component 5 (Valuation of individual style), showed significant differences in their means for the two groups, with higher means in both variables for the group that has already participated in Community Associations. Therefore, it was concluded that people participating in community associations are more likely to refrain from buying clothes whose manufacturing process does not comply with SDG 8.7, which is

Table 7
Comparison performing volunteer work.

Variable	Volunteer work	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	Yes	6,61	1,762	Levene	Yes	0,477	No	0,019
Response	No	5,97	1,644	Levene	Yes	0,477	Yes	0,019
PC1	Yes	6,31	1,831	Levene	Yes	0,133	Yes	0,478
PC1	No	6,11	1,546	Levene	Yes	0,133	Yes	0,478
PC2	Yes	−4,27	2,006	Levene	Yes	0,186	Yes	0,661
PC2	No	−4,23	1,746	Levene	Yes	0,186	Yes	0,661
PC3	Yes	−4,57	1,755	F	Yes	0,591	Yes	0,863
PC3	No	−4,53	1,646	F	Yes	0,591	Yes	0,863
PC4	Yes	6,70	1,637	F	Yes	0,487	Yes	0,597
PC4	No	6,57	1,508	F	Yes	0,487	Yes	0,597
PC5	Yes	4,11	0,996	Levene	Yes	0,656	Yes	0,255
PC5	No	3,93	0,957	Levene	Yes	0,656	Yes	0,255
PC6	Yes	−5,84	1,452	F	Yes	0,890	Yes	0,621
PC6	No	−5,73	1,425	F	Yes	0,890	Yes	0,621

Source: The authors

Table 8
– Comparison by participation in Community Associations.

Variable	Participation in community associations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	Yes	6,76	1,547	F	Yes	0,166	No	0,041
Response	No	6,20	1,815	F	Yes	0,166	No	0,041
PC1	Yes	6,47	1,699	F	Yes	0,826	Yes	0,161
PC1	No	6,09	1,746	F	Yes	0,826	Yes	0,161
PC2	Yes	−4,48	1,964	F	Yes	0,727	Yes	0,164
PC2	No	−4,06	1,894	F	Yes	0,727	Yes	0,164
PC3	Yes	−4,63	1,806	F	Yes	0,518	Yes	0,713
PC3	No	−4,53	1,686	F	Yes	0,518	Yes	0,713
PC4	Yes	6,58	1,542	F	Yes	0,621	Yes	0,602
PC4	No	6,71	1,635	F	Yes	0,621	Yes	0,602
PC5	Yes	4,25	0,823	Levene	No	0,040	No	0,026
PC5	No	3,93	1,048	Levene	No	0,040	No	0,026
PC6	Yes	−5,97	1,513	F	Yes	0,466	Yes	0,318
PC6	No	−5,74	1,399	F	Yes	0,466	Yes	0,318

Source: The authors

related to decent work and economic growth.

Analyzing the knowledge or lack thereof of the Sustainable Development Goal (Table 9), it was found a significant difference in the mean of the dependent variable, the intention to stop buying clothes, with the highest mean being in the group that knows about SDG 8.7. That is, people aware of SDG 8.7 are more likely to refrain from buying clothes whose manufacturing process did not comply with SDG 8.7, which is related to decent work and economic growth. Similarly, the same result was present in principal component 1 (Social Causes Orientation), showing the close association between social cause orientation and avoidance to buy clothes avoidance to buy clothes from manufacturers which does not comply with good practices in the association of economic growth and decent work.

The use of mean difference tests is justified as it allows us to explore whether variations in these characteristics are associated with differences in the principal components that predict the intention to cease purchasing from companies with unethical labor practices. This analysis contributes to the study's objectives by identifying subgroups that are more sensitive to ethical considerations, thereby informing targeted strategies for ethical marketing and consumer education. Significant

Table 9
– Comparison by knowledge about SDG 8.7

Variable	Know SDG 8.7	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Used	Are variances equal? Response	p-Value (Variances)	Are means equal? Response	p-Value (Means)
Response	Yes	6,66	1,597	F	Yes	0,104	No	0,007
Response	No	5,94	1,899	F	Yes	0,104	No	0,007
PC1	Yes	6,55	1,606	F	Yes	0,211	Yes	0,001
PC1	No	5,68	1,835	F	Yes	0,211	Yes	0,001
PC2	Yes	−4,11	1,932	Levene	Yes	0,812	Yes	0,324
PC2	No	−4,40	1,904	Levene	Yes	0,812	Yes	0,324
PC3	Yes	−4,68	1,711	F	Yes	0,873	Yes	0,156
PC3	No	−4,30	1,737	F	Yes	0,873	Yes	0,156
PC4	Yes	6,70	1,610	F	Yes	0,888	Yes	0,753
PC4	No	6,62	1,582	F	Yes	0,888	Yes	0,753
PC5	Yes	4,08	0,957	Levene	No	0,543	Yes	0,512
PC5	No	3,98	1,036	Levene	No	0,543	Yes	0,512
PC6	Yes	−5,82	1,451	F	Yes	0,857	Yes	0,832
PC6	No	−5,78	1,419	F	Yes	0,857	Yes	0,832

Source: The authors

differences were observed, for example, in Fashion Leadership between females and males, and in SDG 8.7 awareness, with those aware showing a higher intention to avoid unethical purchases. Beyond simple mean comparisons, these tests provide nuanced insights into the interplay between demographic factors and ethical consumption. Such findings help to contextualize the results within the broader framework of consumer behavior, indicating that demographic characteristics modulate the weight given to ethical factors in purchasing decisions. Furthermore, these results justify the need for further analyses, such as multi-group comparisons or moderation analyses, to better understand the underlying mechanisms driving these differences.

In summary, the mean difference tests not only reveal significant variations across demographic groups but also enhance the interpretation of the results by linking these differences to targeted consumer segments. This deeper understanding supports the achievement of the study's objectives by highlighting critical areas for intervention and policy development aimed at promoting socially responsible consumption.

3. Discussions

The findings of this study refined and expanded the current understanding of youth consumer behavior in the context of ethical consumption. Notably, the identification of "Social Causes Orientation" as a primary predictor corroborates previous research (Bem et al., 2023), reinforcing the importance of ethical awareness in shaping purchasing decisions. Simultaneously, the emergence of "Fashion Leadership" as a statistically significant variable diverges from Veludo-de-Oliveira's (2014) earlier findings, where this factor was not deemed relevant in predicting consumers' intentions to avoid companies associated with contemporary slavery. This shift may signal a generational reconfiguration in attitudes, potentially influenced by the diffusion of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 and its emphasis on decent work practices. Furthermore, the negative association between "Low Responsible Consumption" and ethical purchasing behavior reveals a latent segment of consumers unaware of or indifferent to sustainability practices, highlighting opportunities for targeted educational interventions. Importantly, the regression analysis conducted in this study moves beyond the limitations of simple mean comparisons by uncovering complex interrelationships among variables. This analytical depth strengthens the model's explanatory power—supported by the validation of residual assumptions and the adequacy of Mallow's Cp value—and contributes meaningfully to both theoretical frameworks and practical applications in sustainable marketing and policy development.

4. Final considerations

This research advances the academic debate on ethical consumption by offering an integrated perspective that connects individual value systems, lifestyle dimensions, and behavioral intentions within the context of contemporary labor concerns. Rather than isolating variables, the study proposes a relational understanding of how socio-ethical orientations may coexist with consumer identity expressions in shaping responses to labor rights violations. In doing so, it invites a rethinking of existing consumer behavior models by recognizing the dynamic interplay between ethical awareness and aesthetic preferences, dialogue particularly relevant in fields such as sustainable marketing and critical consumption studies.

From a managerial viewpoint, the findings suggest the need for more sophisticated engagement strategies that go beyond informational appeals. Effective responses may require aligning brand narratives with the moral aspirations and identity constructions of younger audiences. By fostering authentic partnerships with civil society organizations and leveraging cultural influencers, companies can enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of ethically driven consumers. Educational institutions also emerge as critical actors in building reflexive consumption habits through interdisciplinary curricula that combine sustainability, human rights, and media literacy.

Naturally, these contributions must be weighed against the study's methodological boundaries. The sample's non-probabilistic nature limits external validity, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences. Moreover, the analysis focused primarily on self-reported intentions, which may not directly translate into observable purchasing behavior. Future research should consider triangulating survey data with ethnographic or behavioral tracking methods to capture the complexity of decision-making in real consumption settings. There is also room for comparative studies across cultural contexts to assess how regional narratives and policy environments mediate youth responses to corporate misconduct.

Ultimately, while exploratory in scope, this study lays groundwork for further theoretical elaboration and empirical testing. Its insights offer a stimulus for interdisciplinary dialogue and innovation in how ethical consumption is conceptualized, communicated, and cultivated in an era marked by both increased social awareness and persistent structural inequalities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Rodrigo Martins Baptista: Project administration, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Investigation. **Raquel Cymrot:** Software, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis. **Diógenes de Souza Bido:** Formal analysis, Software, Methodology. **Ana Clara Kaneko Ebert:** Formal analysis. **José Ricardo Baptista:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Validation. **Alcides Barrichello:** Formal analysis, Visualization, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

Ethical use of the AI tools

We would like to inform you that in preparing this manuscript, we ethically utilized AI tools, specifically Grammarly, Sci-Space, and ChatGPT, to assist with English language corrections and the effective structuring of scientific article annotations.

Ethical approval

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie under protocol number 58953022.8.0000.0084, approved on October 4, 2022.

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Declaration of competing interest

This research involved human participants and adhered strictly to the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study, ensuring their voluntary participation and understanding of the research procedures and purposes.

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